

F1 Has Red Bull lost its early advantage?

AUTOSPORT

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Red Bull's need to respond as Hamilton edges further ahead

It must be incredibly frustrating being Red Bull and Max Verstappen at the moment. You've finally produced a car capable of challenging Mercedes, but annoying little factors stopped you winning two of the first three grands prix of 2021. And then, last weekend, at a circuit many thought would be Red Bull territory, Mercedes showed better race pace and used a bold strategy to win again.

As Alex Kalinauckas shows in our report on page 16, Hamilton's superb drive to victory in the Spanish Grand Prix was reminiscent of Verstappen's late defeat in Hungary in 2019, and demonstrated a few weaknesses Red Bull needs to address to get back on top.

Has Red Bull lost its edge (p13)? It's a bit early to say, and the RB16B's pace through the final sector at Barcelona indicates it will be rapid at Monaco later this month – and it will need to be. As Ferrari found out in 2018, catching Hamilton once he has a points lead is no easy task.

Monaco's streets hosted a very different competition last weekend. Formula E's first race on the full GP circuit proved to be a classic, and Matt Kew was there to see Antonio Felix da Costa snatch victory on the final lap, and give the all-electric series a boost (p34).

• As part of our continuing commitment to UK motorsport, we're launching our revised National section this week. Please turn to p59 for the news and action from the vibrant club-racing scene.



Kevin Turner

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**NEXT WEEK
20 MAY**

Alonso's renewed quest
We talk to the double F1 world champ and mark 15 years of GT3



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Steve Etherington/Motorsport Images

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Mercedes says it will fill engine division roles by promoting staff internally

RED BULL IN POACHING RAID

FORMULA 1

Red Bull has continued its raid of Mercedes' Formula 1 engine department, from which it has now poached six staff for its new powertrains division.

Red Bull announced in February that it would be building its F1 power units in-house from next year as Red Bull Powertrains, after acquiring the IP from existing engine supplier Honda at the end of 2021. The team revealed last month that it had signed Ben Hodgkinson, the head of mechanical engineering at Mercedes High Performance Powertrains, to be the technical director for the engine arm.

But a bigger statement came last week when a further five senior positions were filled, with the quintet consisting entirely of Mercedes employees.

Mercedes head of manufacturing Steve Blewett will become Red Bull's power unit production director. Omid Mostaghimi, Mercedes' F1 electronics team leader, will be Red Bull's head of powertrains, electronics and ERS. Pip Clode, who is Mercedes' F1 power unit concept team leader, will join Red Bull as head of mechanical design ERS. Anton Mayo, a Mercedes engineering team leader, will be head of power unit design ICE, while Mercedes F1 trackside and final inspection manager Steve Brodie will become Red Bull's Group Leader ICE Operations.

The team has also appointed a head of mechanical development, who will be named in the coming weeks.

Red Bull F1 chief Christian Horner said there was an "inevitability" that staff from Mercedes would be approached, given the proximity of the HPP base at Brixworth to the Red Bull campus in Milton Keynes.

"We're only 30 miles up the road from Brixworth

where Mercedes have chosen to build their engines in the UK," said Horner. "And they've done that for a reason because the talent is within the UK. I think for us, bringing the engines on site within the campus, fully integrating it with the chassis is tremendously appealing. We've been very flattered by the amount of approaches that we've had. Of course, we're starting with a clean sheet of paper and it's important to get the right people in the right positions."

The change in allegiance of these Mercedes figures comes against the backdrop of the title fight against Red Bull this year. But neither current points leader Lewis Hamilton nor runner-up Max Verstappen were overly surprised to hear about the moves.

"When a team has been so dominant for such a long time, you will try to get those kinds of people," said Verstappen. "But also I think it's an interesting new project to be part of, from our side. When people are in the same place for a long time, I think sometimes they want to seek new challenges. That's understandable."

"If there are people that have moved on, I wish them all the best," Hamilton said of his outgoing colleagues. "We all have to go through our own journeys and make our own decisions, which are right for us. But this is a huge team – it's a big team and it's not about one individual, or even five. It's about a collective."

The idea of continuing team unity is what Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff emphasised in the wake of the announcement, revealing that Red Bull had approached "in all 100 people or so, and they got 15 maybe".

"Losing 10 or 15 or more will not change the collective strengths of the group," said Wolff. "There is no destabilisation whatsoever, because the group is so



Hamilton wants 2022 deal sorted by summer

FORMULA 1

Lewis Hamilton is eager to get a new Formula 1 contract with Mercedes sorted by the summer break to avoid a repeat of this year's late agreement.

Hamilton and Mercedes took until February this year to announce a one-year contract extension for the 2021 season after postponing talks through last year. The seven-time world champion has previously said that he was not treating 2021 as his final season in F1, and has made comments that he intends to be on the grid with Mercedes in 2022 after a recent Pirelli tyre test to help develop next year's rubber.

Hamilton said after last weekend's Spanish Grand Prix that he is looking to open talks with Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff sooner than in 2020, targeting the August summer break as a point by which he would like his future sewn up. "We never want to be in the position that we were in in January, in February," he said. "It ruined my whole winter and I'm sure it wasn't helpful for Toto's, in terms of being out to be off and relaxed, so it felt like we didn't really have much of a break.

"I think we have to be sensible. Naturally we don't have to rush anything but I think we have to be sensible and start conversations.

They're very complex. It's never a super-simple procedure and so hopefully soon we can start, as long as it doesn't interfere with the actual job. We still have 19 races to do, but it would be great to get something in place before the break so then we could be in that break and have a clear picture of the future."

Mercedes currently has two free seats for the 2022 season, with Hamilton's team-mate Valtteri Bottas also out of contract. Mercedes junior George Russell will be a free agent upon the end of his existing Williams deal, making a move up to the senior squad a possibility. Wolff said on Friday at Barcelona that it was "far too early" to discuss next year's Mercedes line-up, having ruled out a mid-season switch for Bottas.

Another name thrown into the mix last weekend was Esteban Ocon, a former Mercedes junior who was in the frame for a seat in 2020 before joining Renault, and has "impressed" Wolff so far this season with Alpine.

Wolff said it was a "weird situation" with Ocon given their loose ties, but felt the first port of call for his future lay with Alpine. "I think it needs to be Laurent [Rossi, Alpine CEO] and Esteban's call first, how to continue, before we start to give an opinion," said Wolff.

LUKE SMITH

ON MERCEDES

big. Performance is being made by the power of the group, and not single individuals."

Red Bull motorsport chief Helmut Marko was quoted in the German press saying that Mercedes was offering to double the salary of staff to rebuff Red Bull's advances. But Wolff said the "lottery number pay-cheques" being proposed by Red Bull were too big a lure for some of the Mercedes staff. "Internally it's quite good to see the really loyal ones, that have been approached, is such an overwhelmingly larger number than the ones that were lured away," said Wolff. "Seeing that loyalty and integrity in a way has confirmed the values of this group. There were some really good people that were approached. And they haven't even thought about it twice."

The ongoing Mercedes staff will be replaced from within the HPP organisation, with Wolff saying it would "open up bottlenecks for younger engineers to come up". "They have an opportunity now," he said. "Organisations are dynamic organs and not static, and sometimes you are being pushed in such situations, sometimes you take your own decisions, but overall you can make it an opportunity rather than a risk."

The signings by Red Bull are set to be tasked with developing an all-new power unit for the next generation of regulations due in 2025, which the company is preparing for without a partner manufacturer. "We have further signings that will be announced in due course," said Horner. "But it's tremendously exciting, and the quality of talent that we're bringing to this project, it's great to see."

LUKE SMITH

➔ P16 SPANISH GP



Domenicali pushing teams to bring US drivers to F1

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 is encouraging teams to look into running American drivers in the hope that the push could pay off after “two or three years”, according to CEO Stefano Domenicali.

F1 commercial rights holder Liberty Media has been pushing for US expansion since acquiring the series in 2017, and announced finalised plans for a Miami Grand Prix in 2022 last month. But there has been no American driver on the F1 grid since Alexander Rossi’s brief stint with Manor at the end of 2015.

Domenicali acknowledged that it was “important” for F1’s footprint in the US to have an American driver in the series, revealing that it was a matter being discussed with teams.

“We are working with teams, trying to understand what is really the

possibility for American drivers to come to the attention of F1 teams in the short term,” said Domenicali. “I don’t see that, being very pragmatic and realistic, coming in the next two or three years. But maybe after, yes. I know that there are teams watching other good drivers, that if they’re ready will be a big boost for the American fans.

“Because as we know faces, drivers, they put enthusiasm, passion, the people want to see these guys. And therefore, the hope is that very, very soon we [will] have American drivers competing against all the others in the F1 championship.”

Mario Andretti, the 1978 world champion, recently said he believed Americans would “go crazy” over Colton Herta in F1 after the 21-year-old’s IndyCar victory at St Petersburg.

LUKE SMITH AND ADAM COOPER

FIVE AMERICANS WHO COULD APPEAL

#1 Josef Newgarden

The two-time IndyCar champion initially wanted to be an F1 driver, despite hailing from NASCAR country. Parlayed a failed bid to race in British F3 into a GP3 season. Big star, and 11 of his 18 IndyCar wins have come on road and street courses.

#2 Colton Herta

The hottest property in IndyCar. Raced in Europe, in British F4 (as

Lando Norris’s team-mate) and Euroformula Open, before returning to the US at his sponsors’ behest. Swashbuckling racer who’d thrill in F1.

#3 Alexander Rossi

Has already raced in F1, of course. Came close to winning an IndyCar title, but is beginning to get overshadowed by exciting team-mate Herta in the Andretti Autosport set-up.

#4 Logan Sargeant

Came close to winning last year’s FIA F3 title and it’s unfathomable that he’s not an F1 junior. Deserved to step up to F2 this year, but budget got in the way.

#5 Kyle Kirkwood

Has won four different open-wheel titles in the US, and is already a race winner in Indy Lights. Clearly a major talent who has excelled at every level.

Grosjean gets Mercedes test

FORMULA 1

Romain Grosjean will return to Formula 1 machinery when he tests Mercedes’ 2019 title winner at Paul Ricard in June, seven months on from his fiery accident.

Grosjean made his final F1 start at last year’s Bahrain Grand Prix, when a first-lap accident tore his Haas in half and left him to escape the fire that engulfed his cockpit. He emerged with burns to his hands that ruled him out of the final two races of the season, bringing an early end to his F1 career. He has since moved into IndyCar with Dale Coyne Racing.

Grosjean vowed to make a return to F1 machinery when possible, with Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff saying at the time that he would be happy to make a test happen. It was announced last week that Wolff had kept his promise to Grosjean, who will drive the Mercedes W10 in a demonstration run at the French Grand Prix before completing a full day of testing on 29 June.

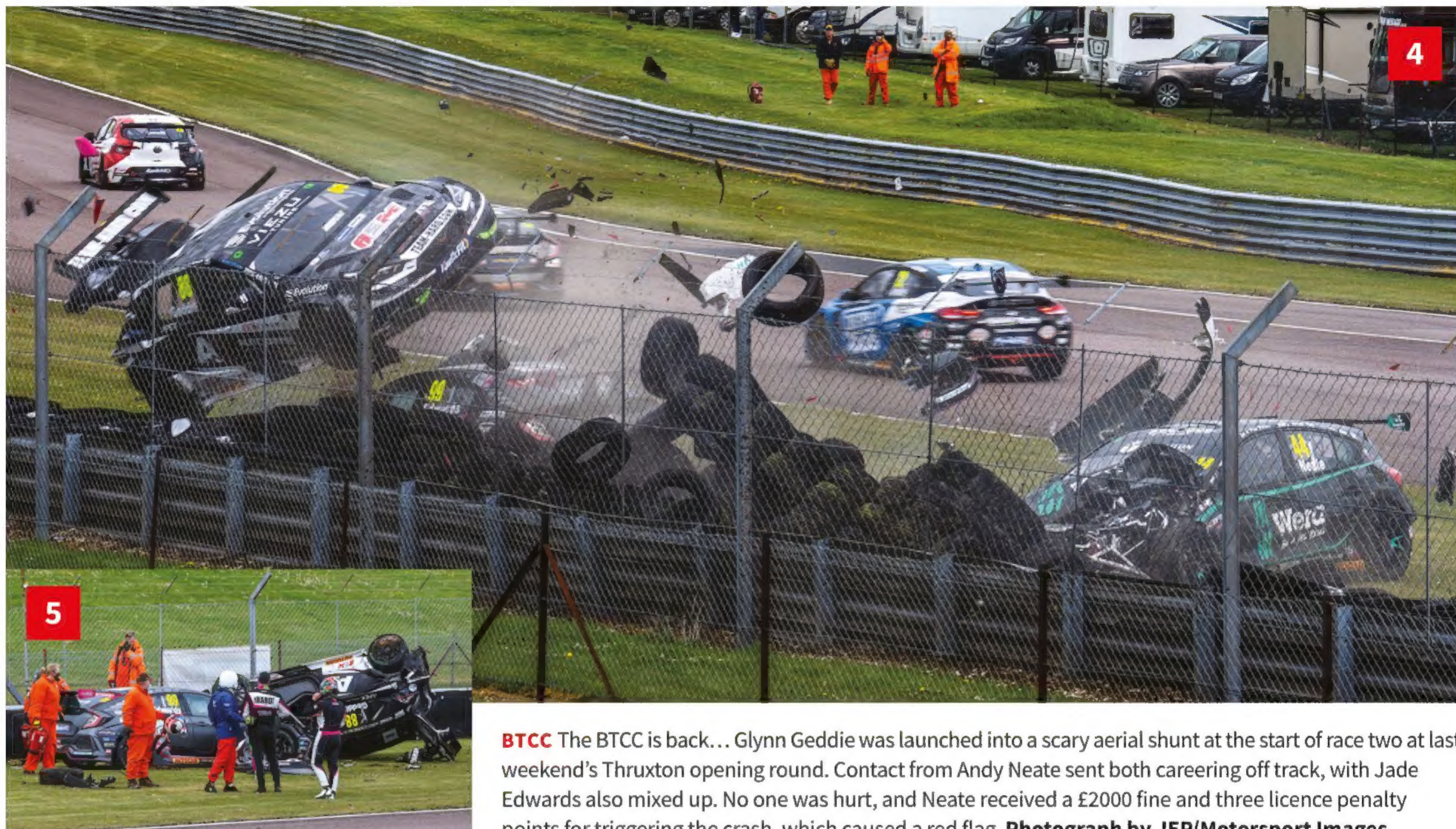
“I am so excited to jump back in an F1 car,” said Grosjean, who completed his seat fitting at Mercedes’ Brackley base back in March using reserve driver Stoffel Vandoorne’s race suit. “It will be a special opportunity for me, and to drive a world championship-winning Mercedes will be a unique experience.

“The first I heard about the chance to drive a Mercedes was in my hospital bed in Bahrain, when Toto was speaking to the media and made the invitation. Reading that news cheered me up a lot!”

“It was clear after his massive accident that this would be the end of his Formula 1 career, and I feel that can’t be the end,” said Wolff. “He made a joke and said he would like to drive the Mercedes, and then we said, ‘OK, drive the Mercedes!’”

LUKE SMITH





BTCC The BTCC is back... Glynn Geddie was launched into a scary aerial shunt at the start of race two at last weekend's Thruxton opening round. Contact from Andy Neate sent both careering off track, with Jade Edwards also mixed up. No one was hurt, and Neate received a £2000 fine and three licence penalty points for triggering the crash, which caused a red flag. **Photograph by JEP/Motorsport Images**

Cammish on podium after last-minute call-up

BTCC

British Touring Car Championship star Dan Cammish was a surprise last-minute call-up for last weekend's opening round at Thruxton with the BTC Racing Honda team.

The Yorkshireman was left high and dry for 2021 when commercial issues forced him out of the Team Dynamics Civic Type R line-up, and Cammish has returned for the 2021 season to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, in which he is a two-time title winner. But BTC was left seeking a replacement when Michael Crees, the 2020 Jack Sears Trophy champion, quit the series in favour of an attack on the Porsche Supercup.

"I had a text message from the team about it after the 'Creesy' announcement came out on the Friday [one week before Thruxton]," said Cammish. "They asked if I was interested because I know the track well, and I definitely know the car. It went quiet for a few days, and then on

Wednesday I got another message from Steve [Dudman, BTC boss]. I literally jumped out of bed and went straight to shakedown at Bicester Heritage. To be honest that was more of a seatfit, because I'm a tall lanky bastard!"

Cammish qualified 12th after getting onto slick tyres too late on the drying track, but he raced to fourth in race one. He then shadowed team-mate Josh Cook home in the sequel for a BTC Honda 1-2. The finale was scuppered when Cammish pitted for slicks just before the rain returned, forcing him back into the pits again.

Although this was a one-off as BTC seeks a full-season replacement, Cammish hopes to be back in the BTCC in 2022. "This is a hiatus but it's not the end," he said. "I'll regroup, look at my options and come back stronger. This has shown that if I get an opportunity at the last minute I can do a good job and play the team game."

Crees has replaced Josh Webster, who has



pulled out of the Supercup due to 'family matters', at Parker Revs Motorsport alongside reigning Carrera Cup GB champion Harry King. The series kicks off next week supporting the Monaco Grand Prix.

MARCUS SIMMONS

P40 BTCC THRUXTON



IMSA/MICHAEL LEVITT

Wickens returns to the track in TCR Hyundai

TCR

Injured IndyCar star Robert Wickens made his return to a race car last week when he tested a TCR Hyundai Veloster at Mid-Ohio.

The Canadian has been endeavouring to build up his lower body performance after incurring spinal damage, among several other injuries, in a huge IndyCar crash on the Pocono oval in 2018.

The test came courtesy of Bryan Herta Autosport and Hyundai. One of BHA's cars, regularly raced in the IMSA Michelin Pilot Challenge by Stephen Simpson and Michael Johnson, is already equipped with

hand controls since Johnson is paralysed from the chest down.

"Bryan approached me a few months ago and asked if I ever want to drive a race car again," said Wickens. I said, 'Of course'. Then things started to slowly come together. Hyundai was doing a trackday here at Mid-Ohio and it was the perfect opportunity, great timing. The hand controls Michael uses and the Veloster are brand new for me, so learning on a wet track wasn't without its difficulties, but we chipped away at getting quicker and quicker.

"There's a ring on the front of the steering wheel that you push for throttle,

and another ring on the backside of the steering wheel that you pull in for brake, which I think is a great system. It's a really steep learning curve and there's been a lot of mental focus to preplan what I'm doing with my hands before I get to the next corner. It's slowly starting to take shape where I'm having to think less about it."

Wickens stated that the test for now was just a one-off, describing it as "a massive step in my journey back," and added that "there's nothing really in the pipeline". Even so, he restated his aim to drive at "an elite level" in motorsport.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Wilson joins Andretti line-up for Indy 500

INDIANAPOLIS 500

Stefan Wilson has landed the sixth Andretti Autosport seat for the Indianapolis 500, beating a list of candidates that included veteran Oriol Servià, Oliver Askew and Spencer Pigot.

This will be the third crack at Indy for the younger brother of the late Justin Wilson. In 2016 he made his debut, only his second IndyCar start, with

KVSH Racing, but the following year gave up his ride with Andretti to make way for Fernando Alonso.

Andretti thanked Wilson by hiring him for 2018, when he went off-strategy to briefly lead before making a splash-and-dash pitstop.

Wilson, who will be reunited with his 2018 race engineer Doug Zister, said: "The engineering side is staying relatively the same on the #25 team, so keeping

that core group together is going to help me pick up where I left off and hit the ground running."

Wilson will join the four Andretti full-timers — Alexander Rossi, Colton Herta, Ryan Hunter-Reay and James Hinchcliffe — plus Marco Andretti, who returns for an Indy 500 one-off.

"That we have six cars and work collectively as one gives us a benefit," he said.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



ABBOTT/MOTORSPORTIMAGES



Electric GT to kick off in 2023

ELECTRIC GT

A name, a start date and a promoter for the FIA's new electric-vehicle sportscar championship were revealed last week. It will be known as the FIA Electric GT Championship, it will kick off in 2023, and Eurosport will be the promoter.

The announcement followed the unveiling of the main technical details of the new category in April. The name does exactly what it says on the tin, while the governing body has linked up with a long-term partner in Discovery-owned Eurosport Events, which already runs the World Touring Car Cup and the European Rally Championship, to promote the series.

Electric GT will begin in two years' time with a minimum of six events, with races across Europe and Asia, including the Middle East. An expansion into the US is expected for season two in 2024.

The FIA has big aspirations for a series it is pitching at factory teams. It wants Electric GT to evolve into a world championship in the fullness of time. "This is clearly the aim of this project, to elevate it to a level of a world championship," said FIA director of sport and touring cars Marek Nawarecki, while pointing out that

such status "is something to be earned".

The FIA's announcement also included details of the format of the events. There will be two races over the course of each two-day meeting held on permanent circuits for the cars, which will be built to regulations framed to enable them to run in the same performance window as conventionally powered GT3 machinery. A sprint race is planned for the Saturday of each meeting, and then a 45-minute main race on Sunday featuring fast-charging pitstops.

FIA president Jean Todt emphasised "the race-to-road approach in terms of technology transfer" on the announcement.

"It is therefore important that this competition is in good hands in terms of promotion," he said. "In the Discovery group, and its subsidiary Eurosport Events, we have a strong partner experienced in promoting world-level motorsport."

Todt added that there is "already interest" from manufacturers in the series, which will allow them to race with an EV model developed for racing or to fit an electric powertrain into an existing GT3 car. Porsche, Audi and Bentley are among the manufacturers to have admitted interest.

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

ABITEBOUL TO MECACHROME

Ex-Renault F1 team principal Cyril Abiteboul has become motorsport advisor to Mecachrome. The French engineering company produces a number of components for the Renault engines used by the Alpine F1 team, and supplies powerplants for FIA Formula 2 and Formula 3.

REUTEMANN UNWELL

Carlos Reutemann, the 1970s and 1980s Argentinian F1 hero who went on to become a politician, was in intensive care in hospital in Rosario last weekend, after being transferred from care in his home city of Santa Fe. The 79-year-old is suffering from digestive bleeding. Reutemann had surgery to remove a liver tumour in 2017 and has struggled with his health ever since.

HONDA PAIR WIN AT FUJI

Real Racing Honda duo Bertrand Baguette and Koudai Tsukakoshi won last Tuesday's Fuji Super GT round on the traditional Japanese Golden Week 4 May date. Tsukakoshi had lost the lead to the ARTA Honda of Nirei Fukuzumi (sharing with Tomoki Nojiri) when Fukuzumi was given a drivethrough penalty for overtaking under a yellow flag. Tsukakoshi then had to fend off Kenta Yamashita in the Rookie Racing Toyota he shared with Kazuya Oshima before taking the flag.

SIR LESLIE MARR 1922-2021

Better known to the wider world as a prominent landscape artist, Sir Leslie Marr, 2nd Baronet, who has died aged 98, started the 1954 and 1955 runnings of the British Grand Prix. Marr raced his Connaught A-Type in national events in 1952-53, before placing third in the Glover Trophy at Goodwood in 1954 and finishing 13th in the GP at Silverstone. After upgrading to a B-Type, he failed to finish at Aintree in 1955, but took a strong fourth in the 1956 New Zealand GP at Ardmore and third in the Lady Wigram Trophy at Christchurch.

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GLICKENHAUS DOWN TO ONE FOR PORTIMAO 8 HOURS

WEC

Glickenhaas has firmed up its World Endurance Championship debut at the Algarve Circuit in June. But only one of its new Le Mans Hypercars will be entered in the race, which counts as the second round of the series.

The American entrant has opted to field a solo car in the Portimao 8 Hours on 13 June because it will be arriving in Portugal off the back of its first endurance simulation with the Pipo-engined 007LMH. A 30-hour test is scheduled for the Motorland Aragon circuit in Spain at the end of this month.

"We're gonna test both cars at Aragon: one will do the whole 30 hours and then it's going to have to be rebuilt, so there's no way it can be available in time to race in Portimao," explained team founder Jim Glickenhaas. "The other one will be shaken down at the test and then taken to Portugal."

A decision on which of the team's roster of seven drivers will race the two cars over the remainder of the season will be made at Motorland.

The team will be at full strength for the third WEC round, the Monza 6 Hours in July, but the programme beyond the Le Mans 24 Hours in August remains unclear. Glickenhaas stated that its participation in the flyaways at Fuji and in Bahrain in September and November respectively will come down to its ability to find commercial partners for the project.

"For us to continue racing through the WEC is dependent on sponsors who want to pay for that," he explained. "We're not this gigantic company with unlimited funds that is simply going to take part in a race just because it's there. It has to make economic sense for our company."

GARY WATKINS



The future of NASCAR is here

NASCAR

NASCAR's three manufacturers – Chevrolet, Ford and Toyota – have unveiled their new body shapes for the Next Gen car that will be used in the 2022 Cup Series, as full details emerged about the Dallara-designed stock car chassis.

Manufacturers have been allowed extra flexibility in body shapes to reflect their road cars: Chevy and Ford with their Camaro ZL1 and Mustang respectively, and Toyota its TRD Camry sedan.

"The greenhouse is now two inches lower and four inches narrower than the current car," explained NASCAR managing director of vehicle systems Brandon Thomas. "The deck lids are also much shorter, per OEM design trends, so the car now looks like a more-aggressive street car."

The bodies, which are now symmetrical, bucking a decades-long design trend, will be mounted upon a standardised chassis. Teams will no longer fabricate their own tube-frame cars from scratch but buy them from NASCAR's appointed builder Technique Chassis. It is assembled in three parts, with bolt-on front and rear clips mounted to the central section, but does

not feature any carbonfibre structural elements, as NASCAR ruled that out.

"We've had some of the best engineering racing minds working on this car from NASCAR, Goodyear, the teams, Dallara and the OEMs," said NASCAR senior vice-president of racing innovation John Probst. "I think people are going to be very happy with what they see on track next February."

NASCAR revealed 26 common component suppliers, with independent suspension and rack-and-pinion steering incorporated for the first time. A flat floor and diffuser are also used, as NASCAR seeks to level the aerodynamic playing field via underfloor downforce levels, while delivering cleaner air to following cars.

Toyota Racing chief David Wilson told Autosport: "This new chassis is a revolutionary change. It's somewhat akin to what IndyCar is, to use a motorsport-related analogy. It's a game-changer, no question about that."

To save costs, NASCAR will cap teams at seven cars per driver per season, almost half the current number. New 18-inch BBS aluminium wheels will allow Goodyear to run softer-compound, lower-profile tyres.

CHARLES BRADLEY





NURBURGRING 24 HOURS The Frikadelli Racing Porsche team took a 1-2 in Sunday's N24 six-hour qualification race. Patrick Pilet, Dennis Olsen, Frederic Makowiecki and Maxime Martin led home the sister 911 GT3-R of Nick Tandy, Earl Bamber, Matt Campbell and Mathieu Jaminet. Manthey Racing's Porsche had finished second, only to be penalised for a flag-obeying infringement, handing third to a Phoenix Audi. **Photograph by Porsche**

Let GTE continue, says Porsche

WEC

The GTE class could have a future after the end of next season. That's the view of Porsche, which is targeting an extension of the life of the category beyond the present two-season commitment by the Automobile Club de l'Ouest and the FIA.

Porsche head of factory motorsport Pascal Zurlinden explained that the target of the German manufacturer is for GTE Am to remain part of the World Endurance Championship and the European Le Mans Series into 2023. He pointed out that 10 of the second iteration of the mid-engined 911 RSRs have been sold for customers for 2021. "I think the ACO will still allow them to run to the end of 2023; that is my feeling," he said. "That is what the customers are committed to and that is our target, until the end of 2023 minimum."

Porsche has effectively ruled out

continuing in GTE Pro, or any successor, in 2023 on its return to the prototype ranks with a new LMDh contender. Ferrari will definitely be ending its involvement in the class after its Le Mans Hypercar comes on stream, but Zurlinden stressed that doesn't necessarily mean the end of the category.

"If you look at the Le Mans 24 Hours this year, we will have four Porsches in the Pro category, two of them being running privately [by HubAuto and Proton/WeatherTech], so who knows what is 2023 to be honest?" he said. "The question is if the Hypercar category is a big success, and LMP2 is quite huge as you can see, the question is how much space do we have for GT?"

"Do you need a pro class in GT, or is it not better to have just the customers [in Am] who have saved the championship in the past years?"

GARY WATKINS

IN THE HEADLINES

SOLBERG JR BACK FOR ITALY

Up-and-coming rally star Oliver Solberg has secured another top-flight World Rally Championship outing on next month's Rally Italy. The son of 2003 WRC champion Petter Solberg will again drive a 2C Competition Hyundai i20 Coupe after impressing on his way to seventh during his debut run with the team on February's Arctic Rally Finland. The Sardinian event takes place on 3-6 June.

TANAK AND NEUVILLE STAY

The WRC silly season is looking very sensible at the moment. Hyundai has retained the services of 2019 champion Ott Tanak plus the marque's long-time star Thierry Neuville for 2022 on what have been described as "multi-year deals". It has also recruited long-time M-Sport Ford technical man Christian Loriaux as what has been described as "an external technical advisor".

GOTZ HEADS DTM TEST

Pre-season testing for the DTM's new GT3 era continued last week at the Lausitzring with three days. Haupt Racing Team Mercedes man Maximilian Gotz was quickest on all three days, with Red Bull's AF Corse Ferrari duo Liam Lawson and Alex Albon ending up second and third overall. Albon was second on day two before times tumbled on the final day. BoP testing was also held.

ESTORIL REPLACES VILA REAL

The World Touring Car Cup's Vila Real round slated for 26-27 June has been replaced by an event at Estoril due to the Portuguese government's edict on mass gatherings in response to the pandemic. A new three-year deal will bring Vila Real back to the calendar from 2022-24. Meanwhile, TCR Europe kicked off its 2021 season at the Slovakia Ring last weekend. Veteran Tom Coronel claimed pole in his Audi, before Cupra star Mikel Azcona won the opener. Mehdi Bennani (Hyundai) took reversed-grid honours.

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Has Red Bull lost its advantage?

A quick car has given Verstappen just one win so far, but he's hardly adrift in the points. The team is sure to hit back, and the title fight temperature could yet spike

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

It would be understandable if the Red Bull Formula 1 team is feeling somewhat frustrated after the first four races of 2021. Aided by the changes to the rear-floor rules, Red Bull has closed the gap to the Mercedes squad that in 2020 produced what is likely to go down as one of the best F1 cars in history, and started the season with the fastest car. And yet the Black Arrows squad still leads both championships, with Lewis Hamilton now on three victories to Max Verstappen's one following his Spanish Grand Prix triumph last Sunday.

It would be easy for Red Bull to say – and indeed, it is saying, via Verstappen in an understandable attempt to put a positive spin on defeat in a race where he led 54 laps – that “compared to last year it has been a big jump forwards”. But competitors at sport's highest level just aren't wired to accept ‘good enough’. And you can be sure that Red Bull is as motivated by the Barcelona loss as it is disappointed that Mercedes was able to wrest back the win.

Take Hamilton. After sealing seven world titles, he's now made the best ever start in a wildly successful F1 career (although he only edges the start he made in 2015 because of his Imola fastest lap point). He knows that ‘good enough’ simply won't cut it.

Red Bull now must harness the motivation stemming from the opening events of 2021. Seeing the lengths to which Hamilton and Mercedes are going to preserve their respective positions is

“The race continued the trend of Red Bull's Saturday pace not quite converting on a Sunday”

inspirational from the outside, so Red Bull must turn that into its own positive progress and not fall into a cycle of despondency. Hamilton may be on 94 points out of a possible maximum of 104, but Verstappen is on 80. It's the Dutchman's best start to a season too, and Red Bull is firmly in the hunt.

That was also clear from its pace last weekend. The Barcelona race continued the trend of Red Bull's Saturday pace not quite converting on a Sunday, with rear-tyre degradation towards the end of a stint the key difference versus Mercedes, which used tactical brilliance to solve the Barcelona overtaking problem. But Mercedes itself has proved that rear-end car trouble can be improved, as evidenced by its progress since testing.

Defeat at Barcelona also doesn't necessarily mean that the pecking order is now set. The big development push that teams

would normally bring to Barcelona to cover them for the middle part of the season hasn't happened, so the ‘fine margins’ work and minor improvement remains key. Mercedes simply can't develop its way clear (although the same is true for Red Bull).

Red Bull did something interesting in Spain. Mercedes observed its rival running considerably more downforce in practice, which it removed for qualifying and the race. Mercedes, said Andrew Shovlin, was “running our max downforce swing” across the weekend. This, plus Verstappen's pace in the technical final sector at Barcelona (he was faster there in qualifying), suggests Red Bull will be strong in Monaco, where it has historically gone well in the turbo-hybrid era, and again in Hungary before the summer break. Monaco comes next and is surely now a ‘must-win’ event for Red Bull.

Looking further ahead, the historical formbook is likely to be a key indicator for the next phase of the season, and it doesn't look too bad for Red Bull. While Baku (aside from Daniel Ricciardo's 2017 win for Red Bull) and Paul Ricard have been something of Mercedes strongholds since joining the calendar, it has done well on home turf in Austria (where Mercedes' track record is comparatively poor of late) and it won the last race at Silverstone. Mercedes struggled considerably on the resurfaced Istanbul Park before Hamilton's wet-weather brilliance won it the 2020 race but, after the UK government's announcement that Turkey is now on its travel ‘red list’, its status is far from clear at the time of writing.

It is further down the line where things get murkier for both squads. Mercedes and Hamilton have traditionally been supreme in the second half of the season. But 2022 is looming and therefore the typical development gains won't likely be coming.

Predictions in modern F1 are fraught with peril. But what if there's something really unexpected in store for the next part of F1 2021's title fight? Verstappen's Turn 1 move at Barcelona was just on the right side of acceptable. He needed Hamilton to be compliant, which the world champion was because “I don't get too aggressive when I don't need to be”.

In the post-race press conference, Hamilton chose his words very carefully when discussing the start. The title contenders have had start clashes in two of the four races so far. At Imola, Hamilton was arguably the aggressor, keeping himself alongside Verstappen in a sequence where he was always going to be run out of room. At Barcelona, Verstappen forced the issue.

Hamilton has the sense and experience to stay clear of a public spat over these moves, but there is a sense that something is building. Sooner or later, there may be fireworks. And perhaps that will be the destabilising factor that gives one of the teams the ultimate edge. ✎

 P16 SPANISH GP



Time comparisons miss the point

Formula E's Monaco lap times can't hope to hold a candle to Formula 1. But for overtaking, for good racing, the electric series knocks F1 into a cocked hat

MATT KEW

FIA president Jean Todt led the push for Formula E to use its own version of the full Monaco circuit to avoid lap-time comparisons with Formula 1 and, by extension, its support series. But late track changes put paid to that wish, with only a tightening of the Nouvelle Chicane to notably separate the two layouts. That seemingly left the all-electric heavyweights ready to be exposed to nascent mockery.

However, before a wheel had turned in the principality last weekend, those criticisms could have been batted off. For the type of person who cared enough to keep an eagle eye on the stopwatch to poke fun was clearly already a dyed-in-the-wool motorsport fan. They well knew the 330bhp Formula E cars – albeit quick in their own right – would be far slower than the grand prix thoroughbreds. They weren't going to tread new ground.

Set aside the negativity for a moment to crunch numbers purely from a place of curiosity and fun, and in truth the battery-powered times were touring somewhere in no man's land.

Antonio Felix da Costa landed pole with a 1m31.3s last weekend, a wholly unsurprising 21.2s shy of Lewis Hamilton's 2019 qualifying record. The DS Techeetah circulated 10.6s slower than that year's FIA Formula 2 polesitter and contemporary Formula E rival Nyck de Vries. When the

“The amount of show and amount of overtakes you have in Formula E is made for this track”

GP3 Series last visited Monaco in 2012, the GT-bound Aaro Vainio topped the one-lap pace with a 1m28s. Da Costa would have missed pole in the dry Formula Renault Eurocup qualifying session in 2018 by just 0.2s. And to complete the set, the Portuguese lapped 3.6s quicker than triple Porsche Supercup champion Michael Ammermuller's 2019 effort.

How about a more searching step back in time? Graham Hill, whose photo remains proudly above the bar in the famous Tip Top restaurant near Mirabeau, headed qualifying for the 1965 GP with a 1m32.5s effort. As the 1500cc era made way for three-litre upper capacity, Hill's benchmark aboard the lipsticked BRM P261 was toppled by Jim Clark. The Lotus 33 pilot (with 2000cc) ran to pole the following year with a 1m29.9s. That puts da Costa in the middle by 1.2s to 1.4s in terms of the nearest lap times.

But his predecessors were faced with a more open Sainte Devote and a much less twisty final sector. Not to mention, the asphalt is now shiny smooth after annual resurfacing. There's elevation and crests aplenty, but little in the way of the characteristic bumps and cracks of a more typical street circuit or even the Monaco of years gone by.

Six passes for the lead and 26 laps later, the Formula E paddock was avoiding comparisons with F1 once again. But in the eyes of 2016-17 champion Lucas di Grassi, that was only because the electric action had surpassed the normal grand prix offering.

The Audi driver, who started 17th and finished 10th, told Autosport: “On the bigger picture, Formula E racing here showed that the show we put on in a track like Monaco isn't comparable. We cannot compare this race with F1 in terms of overtakes, fights. F1 is more of a procession.

“The cars are incredibly fast – they're much faster, arguably even more difficult to drive. But the amount of show and amount of overtakes you have in Formula E; it's just made for this track. I hope the Prince [Albert of Monaco] and the race organiser [Automobile Club de Monaco] and Formula E put us to race here every year because it was just amazing.”

He has a point. The F1 race in the principality receives its illustrious fanfare each year because of the setting, because of the history, not because of the on-track action – or lack thereof. Of the recent GP hits in Monaco – Daniel Ricciardo's botched strategy handing Hamilton the win in 2016, Hamilton's intermediate tyre-shod brilliance in 2008 and Olivier Panis's unlikely heroics in 1996 – all could thank some kind of interference from rain as key to their tip-top entertainment.

Jaguar Racing driver Mitch Evans, completing the Formula E podium after late energy management strife, picked up di Grassi's sentiment. “We've not been able to compare Formula E fairly to F1 or other categories that race on some of the tracks because we always race on very bespoke Formula E circuits,” he said. “I'm sure everyone wanted to compare the lap times, we know it's way off F1 times. But the return you get is incredible racing. The main proving point of doing the longer [Monaco] layout was to show that on a track where the other categories really struggle to have good races. I'm glad it turned out the way [it did] and put a really positive light on the championship.”

In terms of speed, little to no new ground was uncovered by Formula E's foray in Monaco. But where the spectacle is concerned, surely for those 45 minutes plus one lap of electric racing, even those who set out to throw jibes at the championship could appreciate the fine display delivered. ✎



YOUR SAY

OPINION **PIT + PADDOCK**

The fastest qualifiers get first pick, but are encouraged to gamble and start further back, freeing up the front of the grid for others to try and 'do a Trulli'

STEVE MORRIS

Earn points for every place gained

Here's the solution to making Formula 1 qualifying meaningful, but not always having the fastest cars start from the front.

Keep the existing qualifying format and points for each finishing position, but offer three points for every place gained over the race. Oh, and the person that qualifies fastest gets first choice of grid position and so on. So, choose to start from pole and win the race, you get 25 points. However, choose to start seventh and come home second, you get 18 for your position plus 15 points for positions gained so you score 33; 20th to 10th, that's 31 points!

It adds a huge new element to the event, the fastest qualifiers get first pick, but are encouraged to gamble and start further back, freeing up the front of the grid for other cars to try and 'do a Trulli' and hang on to the lead.

Now tell me you wouldn't want to see how that pans out.

Steve Morris
London

Welcome back, hillclimbing

Delighted to see the report on the hillclimb at Prescott (Club Autosport, 29 April). Really hope that is a prelude to seeing coverage of the entire British championship in your august pages.

I have really missed seeing event reports on one of the UK's most dramatic series. I cannot wait to see the likes of Messrs Gould, Hall, Menzies, Moran, Summers and Willis trying to tame the hill at Shelsley Walsh. If dry, the outright hill record could fall. I have my tickets!


Simon Scott
Coxwold, York



HAVE YOUR SAY, GET IN TOUCH

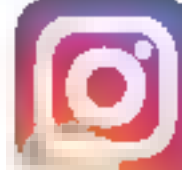
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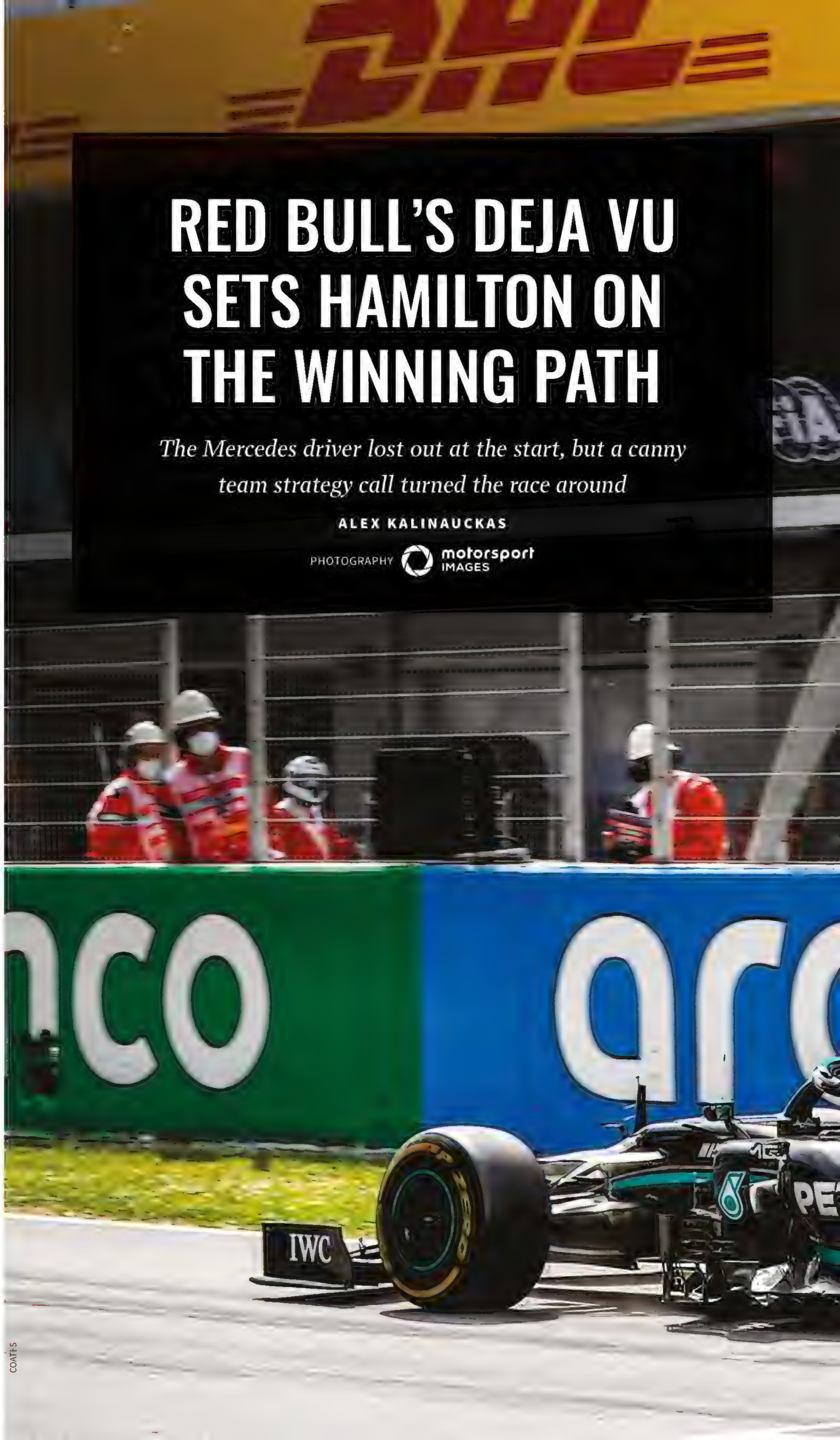

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RED BULL'S DEJA VU SETS HAMILTON ON THE WINNING PATH

*The Mercedes driver lost out at the start, but a canny
team strategy call turned the race around*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport
IMAGES**





“

t could be Hungary all over again here.” Max Verstappen’s engineer Gianpiero Lambiase called it perfectly, and painfully, as Lewis Hamilton peeled off from behind his charge to pit for a second time with a third of the 2021 Spanish Grand Prix remaining. In that moment, Red Bull realised that Mercedes had set the board in horribly familiar fashion, sending Hamilton on a late-race charge with a tyre-life-offset advantage to win the encounter in much the same way as he had done at the Hungaroring in 2019.

At least Red Bull’s considerable progress since the previous Barcelona race and Verstappen’s first-corner boldness had made it an engaging, if not action-packed, contest. But such was the swing that Mercedes’ strategists had found with their second big call of the race that, when the moment of victory finally came, it wasn’t all that climactic.

At the end of lap 59 of 66 – six laps earlier than Mercedes’ calculations had estimated – Hamilton raced onto the pit straight just 0.5s behind Verstappen, in position to make the race-winning pass. The Dutchman weaved across the road to try to break the tow he was producing, but defeat was inevitable. Hamilton surged level using his DRS advantage, then his fresher rubber allowed him to brake later and sweep into Turn 1 on the racing line – his 98th Formula 1 career win was all but sealed.

Yet 59 laps earlier at that spot, Hamilton could have been forgiven for thinking he’d lost the race. The polesitter – a position Hamilton was in for the 100th time in his remarkable career – had made a fine getaway. It was perhaps slightly slower initially than his fellow front-row starter, but the Mercedes made up enough ground in the next phase that Verstappen decided to pull in behind it. And here was where Hamilton made his only real mistake of last weekend.

“Valtteri [Bottas] was obviously starting in third and the goal was to work as a team,” he would later explain. “So, I stayed to the left. I think in hindsight there could have been a moment, looking back, that when Max moved in behind me for a second, I could have pulled across and sealed the job there – but I didn’t.”

Verstappen didn’t need a second invitation, with the Mercedes firmly holding the outside line. He stole to Hamilton’s inside at the Turn 1 braking point and brashly pushed his way to the racing line for the closely following Turn 2. Here, as the title favourites went wheel-



With Verstappen ahead, Hamilton had to “switch to a different mode” mentally





Momentary hesitation from Hamilton is all the invitation Verstappen needs to muscle into the lead

to-wheel for the fourth time in four races so far in 2021, Hamilton had a choice to make, one that sent him down the path that ultimately ended in such uncomfortably recognisable fashion for Red Bull.

"I just made sure I gave as much space as I could to Max," he said of his choice to back out of a clash. "In my mind, it's always a marathon, not a sprint, so I'm just always thinking the long game. Sure, you could be a little bit more aggressive. Do I need to? Well, I'm in the position that I'm in because I don't get too aggressive when I don't need to be."

Wise words from the seven-time world champion but, given the extreme challenge of overtaking in a straight fight to the finish at Barcelona, Hamilton knew his only hope of getting the lead back was to quickly "switch into a different mode" mentally. "After that I was just hunting," he explained.

The battle for the win was effectively a two-horse race just two corners after Verstappen's lunge got him ahead. With Hamilton checking up and then regathering his momentum through Turn 2, the following Bottas had to do likewise. But even he "didn't see" what was coming next. In exactly the same way that Fernando Alonso had roared past Hamilton's Mercedes and Kimi Raikkonen's Lotus at the start of the 2013 Spanish GP, Charles Leclerc sent his Ferrari shooting around Bottas's left-hand side – the outside – as they raced through Turn 3. Leclerc was so fast that the move was over way before the corner fully unwound and the Turn 4 right approach approached. Over the race's first seven

"I'M IN THE POSITION I'M IN BECAUSE I DON'T GET TOO AGGRESSIVE WHEN I DON'T NEED TO BE"

laps, Leclerc shipped nearly 10s to Verstappen, with Bottas unable to find a way past. Meanwhile, Verstappen's lead – 1.5s at the end of the first lap – grew to a maximum of 1.9s.

But both Mercedes drivers were given the chance to make amends for their disappointing starts when the safety car was called on lap eight. Yuki Tsunoda's miserable weekend had ended when a sudden, and so far unexplained, loss of fuel pressure caused his AlphaTauri to shut down as he approached the reprofiled Turn 10 long left on lap seven. The car ground to a halt on the runoff heading to the corner's exit and had to be craned away.

Although it offered a chance of quick redemption, the lap 11 restart did not go the Black Arrows drivers' respective ways. Verstappen left Hamilton behind when he hit the gas exiting the final chicane, and then weaved on the straight – this time with no sense of accompanying foreboding – to disrupt the tow back to the pack. In any case, Leclerc was closer to Hamilton than the Briton was to Verstappen, which >>



Aggressive call to pit
Hamilton a second time
set up charge to the finish

also prevented Bottas from rescuing third at this stage.

So, once again, the two leaders raced clear of the Ferrari, with Bottas cooped up all the way to his first stop on lap 23. Over the course of the first stint, the gap between Verstappen and Hamilton rather ebbed and flowed, with the world champion generally unable to get within DRS range. But from a maximum gap of 1.5 seconds at the end of lap 20, Verstappen's advantage then began to fall quite pointedly, as he struggled to match Hamilton in lapping in the low to mid 1m23s.

Then came two significant Verstappen mistakes. At the end of lap 24 he "called himself in", according to Red Bull team boss Christian Horner, and entered the pits one lap earlier than his squad was anticipating. Nevertheless, Red Bull reacted rapidly to get his new medium tyres ready, the left-rear arriving just after Verstappen had stopped and leading to approximately two seconds of additional stationary time (given Red Bull's typical sub-2s pit prowess).

When he rejoined, Verstappen was pushing hard – too hard at Turn 5, as he trailed team-mate Sergio Perez, already effectively a pitstop adrift while running sixth early on behind Daniel Ricciardo.



Perez took too long
getting past Ricciardo,
to Red Bull's chagrin

Verstappen locked up at the left-hander and appeared to damage the left-front tyre of the mediums he'd be attempting to get to the finish.

But despite all the tyre drama, Verstappen was still going so quickly that Mercedes concluded "by the time Lewis got to about Turn 10", according to team director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin, that pitting to immediately mirror Red Bull wasn't going to cut it. "We were ready, and we were getting the crew ready and all we were doing was monitoring the gap," Shovlin explained. "[But] we cancelled that. Because otherwise we would have dropped out just behind him and had a repeat of the [first] stint. When you can't take position, you then move to look to get an offset."

And that's exactly what Mercedes chose to do. It left Hamilton lapping at the head of the pack for a further four laps. He had handed time to his now medium-shod rival during that phase, yet it was worth it for what came next. Once Hamilton had come in to trade his softs for mediums at the end of lap 28, he faced a 5.6s deficit the next time he came across the finish line. But the offset Mercedes had targeted meant he could unleash his potential in free air, with Leclerc pitting on the same lap as Hamilton from his distant third place (already set to emerge behind Bottas, thanks to the Finn's own excellent pace after his respective earlier release to take the mediums).

Hamilton just carved his way back up to Verstappen, who was trying "everything to manage it as good as I could, looking after tyres and stuff". The Mercedes closed in at a rate of 1.1s per lap over the first four tours that followed Hamilton's out-lap. By the end of lap 33, he was back to 1s behind. But at this point, Verstappen did something that looked like it might have won him the race had things worked out differently for Red Bull. He upped his pace considerably, moving from the mid-1m22s to the mid-1m21s, which stymied Hamilton's charge. For the next nine laps, the status quo that had held for most of the first stint returned. Had Hamilton overdone it on his charge back to the Red Bull? Could Verstappen hang on to nurse his mediums over effectively two-thirds distance despite Hamilton's constant close presence?

With the benefit of hindsight, and by recalling how Verstappen was



Bottas was unable
to find a way past
Leclerc on track



Irresistible force:
Hamilton deposes
Verstappen from lead

“BECAUSE THE FIELD OPENED UP SO QUICKLY BEHIND THEM, LEWIS EFFECTIVELY GOT A FREE STOP”

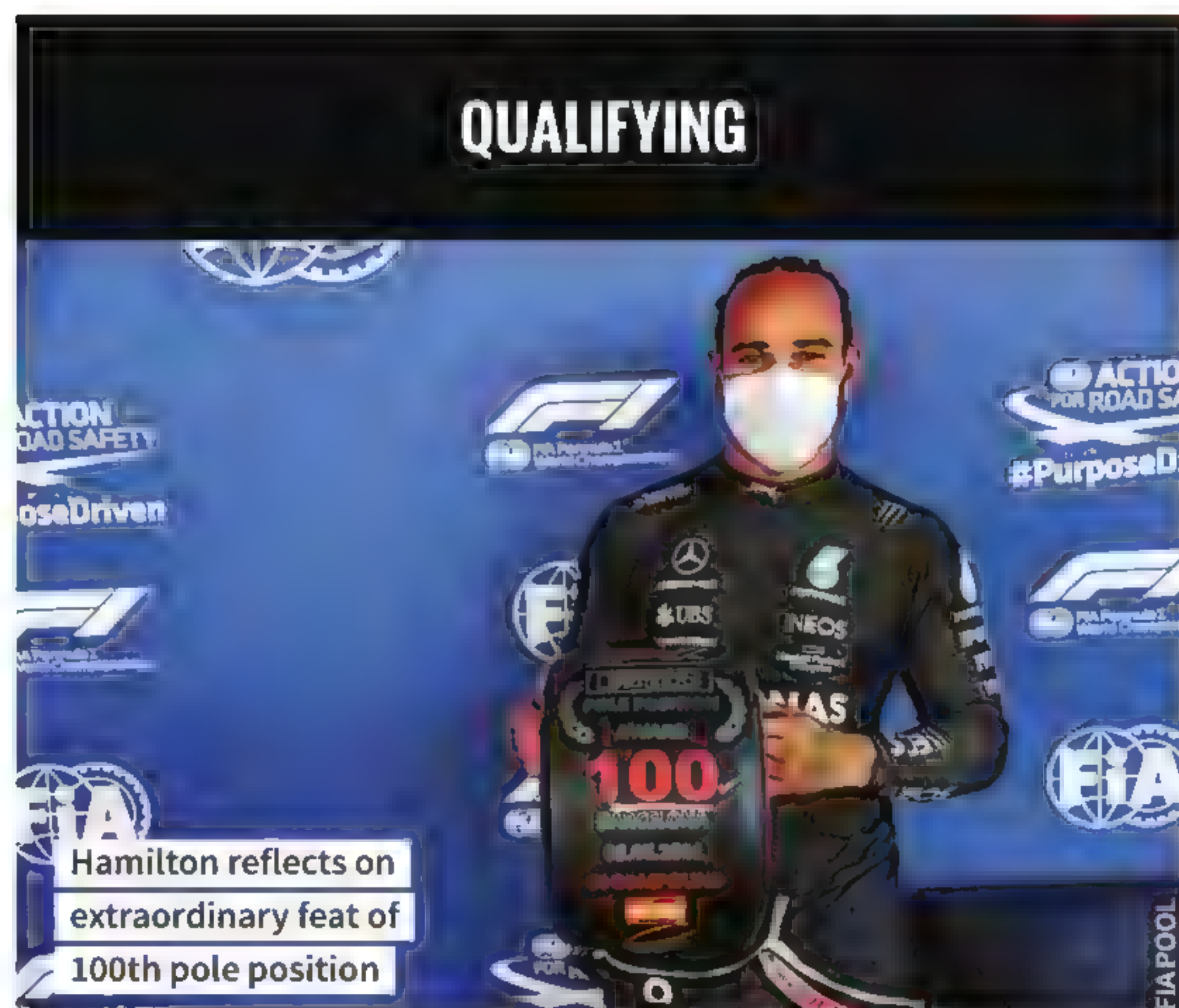
losing time towards the end of his first stint on the softs, we can speculate that the latter consideration would have been a very tough ask. Most teams had come into the race with a plan to make the one-stopper work, but it proved to be very difficult, even with the overtaking challenge.

But, of course, this is all academic because of what Mercedes did next. At the end of lap 42, it suddenly called Hamilton in for a second stop. It was an aggressive call, one that instantly set up a charge to the finish. And Mercedes was able to take that bold route because of the advantage the leaders had pulled out on the pursuing pack.

As good as Leclerc was last Sunday, his Ferrari's pace deficit to Verstappen and Hamilton meant he was 27.6s off the lead at the end of lap 41. That was more than enough time for Mercedes to bring Hamilton in and take another set of mediums – this one scrubbed – and emerge ahead, with only its other car shooting inevitably past.

“Because the field opened up so quickly behind them, Lewis effectively got a free stop,” said Horner. “They’ve got the choice [to say], ‘OK, we don’t think we’re going to pass him on track because we haven’t managed it in the first 40 laps, we’ll go for a two-stop.’ At that point, if you cover the following lap, you’ve given up track position. And they just had a faster car than us, so all we could do really was try and hang it out and see if we could maintain a decent pace [to the finish].”

But that simple situation was only possible for Mercedes because of something else unnervingly familiar for Red Bull. Just as in Hungary nearly two years ago, Verstappen was taking on Mercedes solo, with no team-mate running close by that either could have disrupted Hamilton's charge, or warned Mercedes off attempting it altogether. >>



Hamilton reflects on
extraordinary feat of
100th pole position

For the second weekend in succession, Formula 1 qualifying was something of an anti-climax. That isn't to take anything away from Lewis Hamilton's tremendous achievement in beating Max Verstappen to the Spanish Grand Prix's top grid spot, and with it clinching his 100th pole at motorsport's highest level. It's just that qualifying's top three places were sealed on the first runs in Q3, with Hamilton, Verstappen and Valtteri Bottas all unable to improve.

There were various theories. Bottas reckoned it was down to “conditions, whether it's the wind or something”, which Verstappen supported. “If it increases with a few km/h it can make a difference into a certain corner when you're driving right on the limit,” said the Red Bull driver. “Suddenly you have a bit less rear grip or a bit more understeer – it can completely change the balance through the corner. And that's basically what happened in the last run.”

Hamilton, meanwhile, explained that “the whole car is hotter for the second run – the brakes are hotter, the tyre rise is going to be a different profile compared to run one. I would say we're pushing more, but for some reason the car does drop off. And the wind does play a bit of a role.”

Whatever the main cause, Hamilton's 1m16.741s from the opening Q3 runs stood as the pole-winning time. He had been running behind Sergio Perez when the Red Bull driver spun after dipping his left-side wheels in the gravel on turn-in for the Turn 13 downhill, 90-degree right, but the incident had cleared by the time Hamilton went past.

On the second run, Hamilton alone looked to be improving after the first sector, but with the best of the track/car conditions gone he seemed to lose momentum through Turn 7 and Campsa, and then had a big oversteer moment exiting the penultimate corner.

But his rivals were even further from reproducing their best, Bottas unable to improve even after an oversteer snap at the reprofiled Turn 10 had lost him a tenth on his first lap.

Hamilton had endured a trying session. He made a set-up gamble that left him making “small adjustments” each time he returned to the pits to fix an understeer issue that was making his W12 “very lazy”, and not turning “around the corner the way that I wanted”. But he rode out the journey to seal an F1 record he seemed unable to comprehend.

Behind the top three, Charles Leclerc took fourth place for the third time this season, with Esteban Ocon a brilliant fifth, although rueing an engine misfire that cost him the chance to go one spot higher.

“SUDDENLY YOU HAVE A BIT LESS REAR GRIP OR A BIT MORE UNDERSTEER”



Perez's problems started with his poor qualifying, hampered by shoulder pain. But the problems got bigger even after he gained ground off the line, when he was so quickly dropped out of the lead fight by his place down the order. After effectively waving Verstappen through during the first pitstop phase, he had then fallen to 43.8s behind his team-mate, and was still bottled up behind Ricciardo's McLaren, on the lap Hamilton stopped again. And Red Bull knew exactly how costly the gap between Verstappen and Perez was.

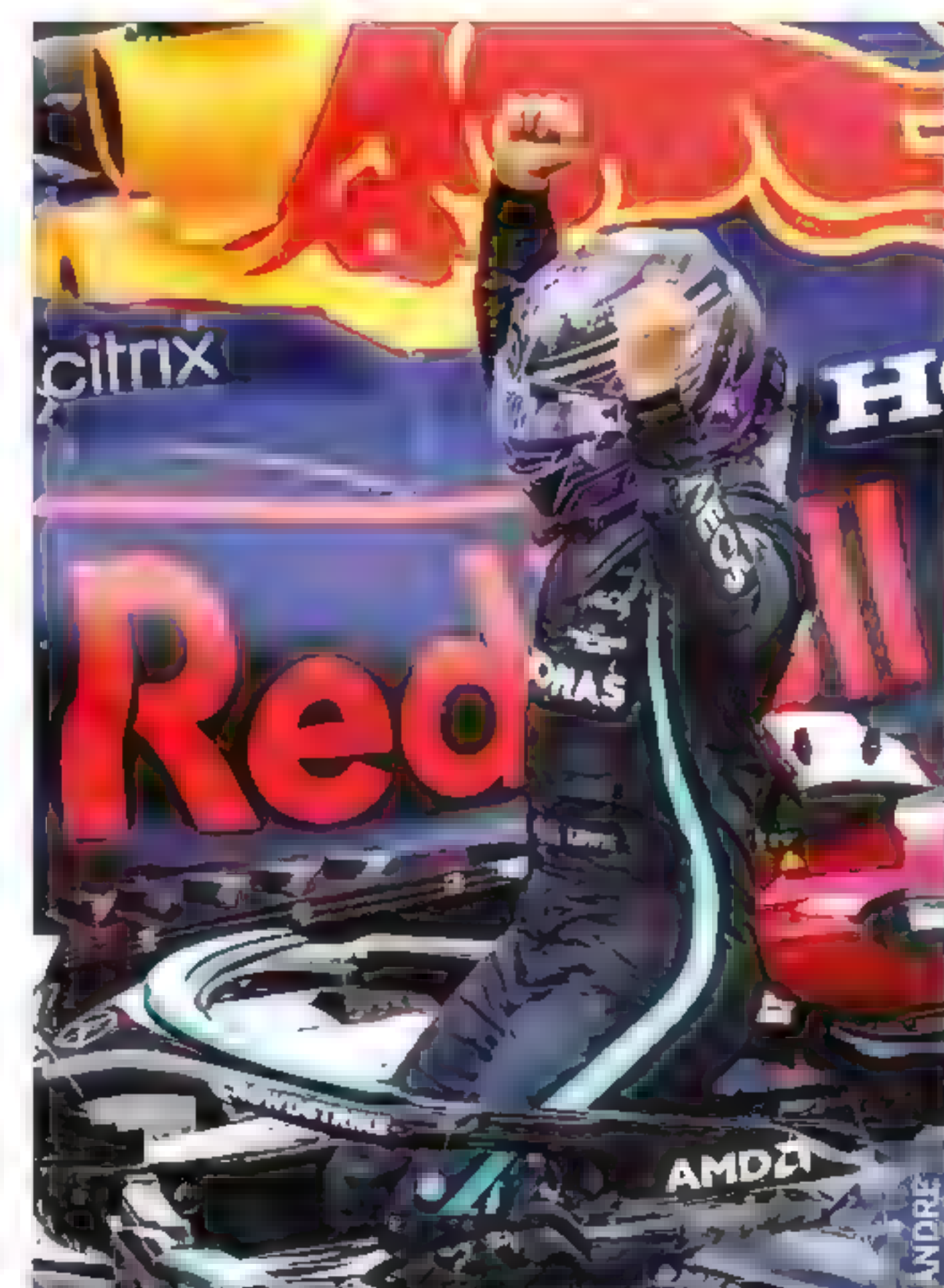
"We desperately need him to be in that gap, so Mercedes don't have the strategic options that they had," Horner reflected. "Lewis got a free

stop as he had in Hungary. He's only got to get past his team-mate, and that was never going to be an issue. So yeah, that's why we need both cars up there strategically, so that option isn't available to Mercedes."

While Horner's assessment should make a point to Perez — let's not forget that after he failed to provide proper back-up to Verstappen in the infamous Hungary defeat, Pierre Gasly lost his Red Bull drive — there was one aspect of his summary that wasn't quite spot on.

Something could still go wrong for Mercedes and, to a certain extent, very nearly did. Hamilton's pace in his third stint was scintillating. In the 16 laps after he completed his second out-lap he was 1.4s faster

TRACK





Hamilton now has three wins to Verstappen's sole race victory



Although numbers were limited, fans' presence lifted the atmosphere

per lap than Verstappen. But on the ninth tour of that run, he caught his team-mate. Bottas was ordered “don’t hold Lewis up”, but didn’t exactly make things easy for his team-mate as he was trying to “do the best thing I could for us as a team and for myself”. That meant losing as little time as possible to ensure he had a gap to make a late stop ahead of Leclerc (who also stopped twice anyway) to try to chase the fastest lap, something of a selfish attitude given how late Mercedes was predicting Hamilton would catch Verstappen.

In the end, Hamilton scythed ahead at Turn 10, insisting “Valtteri was completely fair” regarding the positioning of the other Mercedes.

“THEY ARE JUST FANTASTIC, THE STRATEGISTS. YOU ASK FOR A PLAN, AND SUDDENLY IT IS ALL THERE”

And ultimately, it didn’t matter given that Hamilton continued on his way and duly defeated Verstappen at pretty much the same place where he had initially been stumped.

“I really need to take my hat off for the group of strategists, led by James [Vowles] and all the group back in Brackley,” Mercedes boss Toto Wolff said afterwards. “They are just fantastic, the mathematicians and strategists, coming up with all the simulations. You ask for a plan, and suddenly it is all there. ‘At the end,’ they said in our plan, ‘if we were to stop now, we could end up catching him one lap to the end, he would have a tyre differential of 1.4s, and we believe that it is enough.’ You trust them and trust the data. But they were terribly wrong – we caught him [six] laps to the end.”

What is intriguing is that, despite its faith in switching to a two-stopper, Mercedes wasn’t convinced that Red Bull wouldn’t try the same trick. Again, just like in Hungary, Hamilton was urged to “box opposite Verstappen” just before he came in for the critical second

stop. “When it came to the point where we pulled the trigger, we were probably nudging towards being worried that Max was going to do it before us,” explained Shovlin.

But Red Bull was adamant that it couldn’t afford to sacrifice the track position Verstappen had done well to seize at the first corner. Plus, it had come into the race with only a new set of hards (never a realistic option given its poor performance compared to the softer compounds in relatively cool Barcelona temperatures) or new softs left to give Verstappen at any theoretical second stop. “[The softs] wouldn’t have had the range that those mediums would’ve had,” Horner surmised. “I think the reality is, whatever we would’ve done, they just had a faster car with slightly less deg than us.”

Immediately after Hamilton retook the lead for good, Red Bull pitted Verstappen to give him the chance to grab the fastest-lap bonus point, which he took with a 1m18.149s versus Bottas’s 1m19.430s. And in the aftermath of the race at F1’s laboratory venue, a trend was being plotted: that Red Bull has a car a shade faster in ultimate pace, but which wears its rear tyres harder across race stints. This would explain Verstappen’s struggles at the end of his first stint, and why he felt “when we put on the mediums, [Hamilton] had a lot more pace – he could just stay within one second, so there was not much we could have done”.

There was, however, a sense that Red Bull could have done *something* with both of its cars in play at the front in Spain. But if Verstappen thought that too, he wasn’t giving it away when asked what Red Bull has to do to finally win a ‘Hungary 2019 situation’ should it reoccur.

“Just need a faster car,” he said. “It’s very simple. Then you don’t need to get into a situation like that.” ❄

NEXT F1 REPORT

MONACO GRAND PRIX 27 MAY ISSUE

Formula 1’s most glamorous location is back after a year’s COVID-enforced hiatus. Time for Verstappen to seize back the initiative?

Tough time for Perez on way to fifth

Sergio Perez had to contend with a shoulder problem in qualifying that contributed to him lining his Red Bull up a disappointing eighth for the Spanish Grand Prix.

Having recovered by Sunday morning, the Mexican dispatched Esteban Ocon and Carlos Sainz Jr at the start to climb into sixth. But Perez hit something of an impasse with the McLaren of Daniel Ricciardo, who proved a tricky customer to clear despite the powerful effect of DRS.

Even through the first round of stops, the Australian remained ahead. Perez finally passed Ricciardo at the start of lap 46, cruising around the outside at Turn 1 to relegate him to sixth. Perez then had enough in reserve to lap faster than Ricciardo, cementing fifth place after the midfield runners all came in to make a second stop.

Red Bull's fellow Honda-powered team, AlphaTauri, endured a difficult race in which Pierre Gasly had to serve a five-second penalty for starting beyond his grid slot. Gasly had to recover from the back of the field following his first stop, but battled his way through the midfield and ended up on Ocon's tail at the end, narrowly losing the chance to claim ninth place.

Yuki Tsunoda's weekend was rather wretched. After his Q1 elimination, the Japanese rookie's car shut down with a loss of fuel pressure after just six laps, stopping him at Turn 10 and bringing out the safety car.



Leclerc stars as Ferrari makes breakthrough

Ferrari definitively moved to the front of the Formula 1 midfield for the first time this year at Barcelona, where Charles Leclerc finished fourth following an early fight with Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas.

After getting the jump on Bottas at Turn 3 on the opening lap, Leclerc was able to keep the Mercedes at bay before the safety car, and appeared to catch the Finn napping on the restart to deny him the chance to quickly repass. Leclerc stayed ahead until Bottas pitted and then leapfrogged ahead in clear air, but the Ferrari driver was comfortably clear of the fight for fifth for the remainder of the race, bringing home a solid fourth-place finish on what became a two-stop strategy.

"I felt very good in the car, everything came together," Leclerc said. "I did a good start, managed the softs well, which was not easy, and then also managed the mediums very well, which we could have taken to the end. We only stopped because we had a free pitstop to

[Sergio] Perez, who stopped too. It's been a strong weekend for me overall, which is good to bounce back from Portimao when I was quite off on the Friday and Saturday, even though I had a good race too on the Sunday."

Leclerc's team-mate Carlos Sainz Jr was left disappointed after a slow start from sixth on the grid meant he lost places to Perez and Daniel Ricciardo. Sainz was able to clear Esteban Ocon at the first round of stops and bore down on Ricciardo in the closing stages, but fell 0.9 seconds shy at the flag, leaving him seventh. "I'm not very satisfied," Sainz said. "The car was better than the result. For the first time this year we were clearly the fastest mid-grid car, but I had a very bad first lap."

Team boss Mattia Binotto was glad that Ferrari had sorted the pace drop-off between qualifying and the race that had marred the season's earlier rounds, after it had worked on its tyre management weakness. "That was our sole purpose of the overall weekend," he said.



"GETTING READY IN THE GARAGE, WHEN JUST PICKING UP THE SET, THAT DAMAGED THE VALVE"

Alfa Romeo head of track engineering Xevi Pujolar explains how the left-front medium tyre being readied for Antonio Giovinazzi during his safety car stop became punctured in the pits, which caused a 35.1s delay.



Williams improves but search for points continues

George Russell said his Williams last Sunday was “the best it has ever felt in a race”, despite missing out on breakthrough points.

Williams double-stacked Russell and Nicholas Latifi at an early stop under the safety car, and then ran to the end of the race with only one more stop each, leaving Russell on the fringes of the points with 15 laps to go. But the two-stopping Pierre Gasly and Lance Stroll, plus Kimi Raikkonen on a genuine one-

stopper, eventually passed the fading Williams all on one lap as Russell slumped to 14th. He then also lost out to Sebastian Vettel late on, despite the struggles both Aston Martins faced on soft tyres.

Stroll missed out on a point after a late battle with Gasly, having also duelled thrice with Fernando Alonso, whose attempt at a one-stopper was abandoned late on when he pitted five laps from home, leaving him 17th.



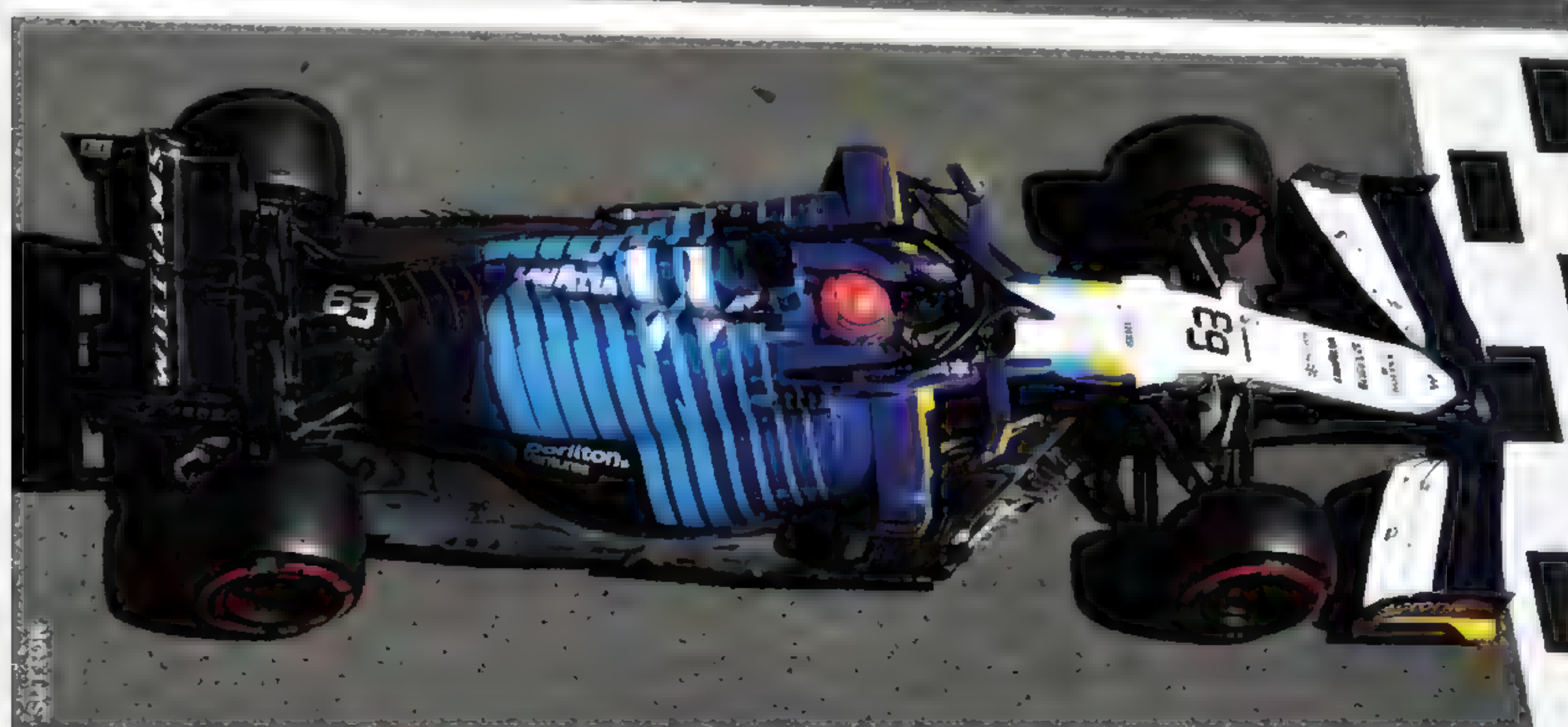
Ricciardo hits his stride at McLaren

Daniel Ricciardo produced his best race so far in McLaren colours, taking a valiant sixth place at Barcelona after defending fifth from Sergio Perez throughout the opening two thirds of the race.

After clearing Carlos Sainz Jr and Esteban Ocon at the start, Ricciardo absorbed heavy pressure from Perez, although was ordered by race control to stop weaving on the start/finish straight to break the DRS tow. After his second stop, Ricciardo then had to pick his way past team-mate Lando Norris and the Alpine of Ocon to return to sixth place. Although Sainz put in a late race charge and caught Ricciardo, the Australian managed to hold on to score eight points.

Norris struggled by comparison, making no progress from ninth at the start and staying there until the first round of pitstops. He cycled out behind Ocon and Sainz once again but went longer into the race and, after stopping a second time, was able to pick past the one-stopping Ocon on fresher tyres late on to finish eighth.

Ocon, after qualifying an excellent fifth, was gazumped at the start by Perez and Ricciardo as he was pinched on the inside for Turn 1, and lost a further place to Sainz during the first round of stops. On the tough one-stopper, Ocon ran as high as sixth before he began to lose ground to his twice-stopping midfield rivals and eventually dropped to ninth, narrowly fending off Pierre Gasly's late charge at the line.



Q&A

FERNANDO ALONSO ALPINE DRIVER



Was your one-stop strategy attempt too risky?

It was risky, but in a way, we were P11 on lap twentysomething, when we started to stop everybody. We'd had to respond to Pierre Gasly, who stopped on lap [18], but then we were P11. I think the best way to score that 10th position was to risk, and we took a lot of risk. It didn't work today because we finished the tyres at the end. But if we don't do that and we stay out, probably Gasly will overtake us, Sebastian Vettel will overtake us, and then you are P12 or

P13 for the remainder of the race. So yeah, it was difficult.

Racing in the pack for so long, did you get a clear indication

of Alpine's race pace?

No, but I think we had some good answers on some of the performance of the car and performance of the competitors. I was more or less comfortable. I think we had more pace in qualifying than the race, to be honest. We are putting things together, slowly step by step. The most important thing now is to get more performance out of the car on my side, and I think we identified what are the areas we can exploit from my side. We are working on that.

This week is going to be intense, again [with] some homework.

How did you feel battling in the pack?

It was fun. I really enjoyed it. First, because it was Barcelona, the home grand prix, so it was a special Sunday for me. The grandstands, there were not many people, only 1000, but you feel a little bit of adrenalin when you see the fans, and with the speaker saying your name [going] into the race. This race was more special than the other three, for sure. Then the race was fun, lots of battles with different tyre strategies. We would have loved to have a better finishing position and score points, but it was not possible.

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DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA

RED BULL TRIES MONACO WING IN SPAIN?

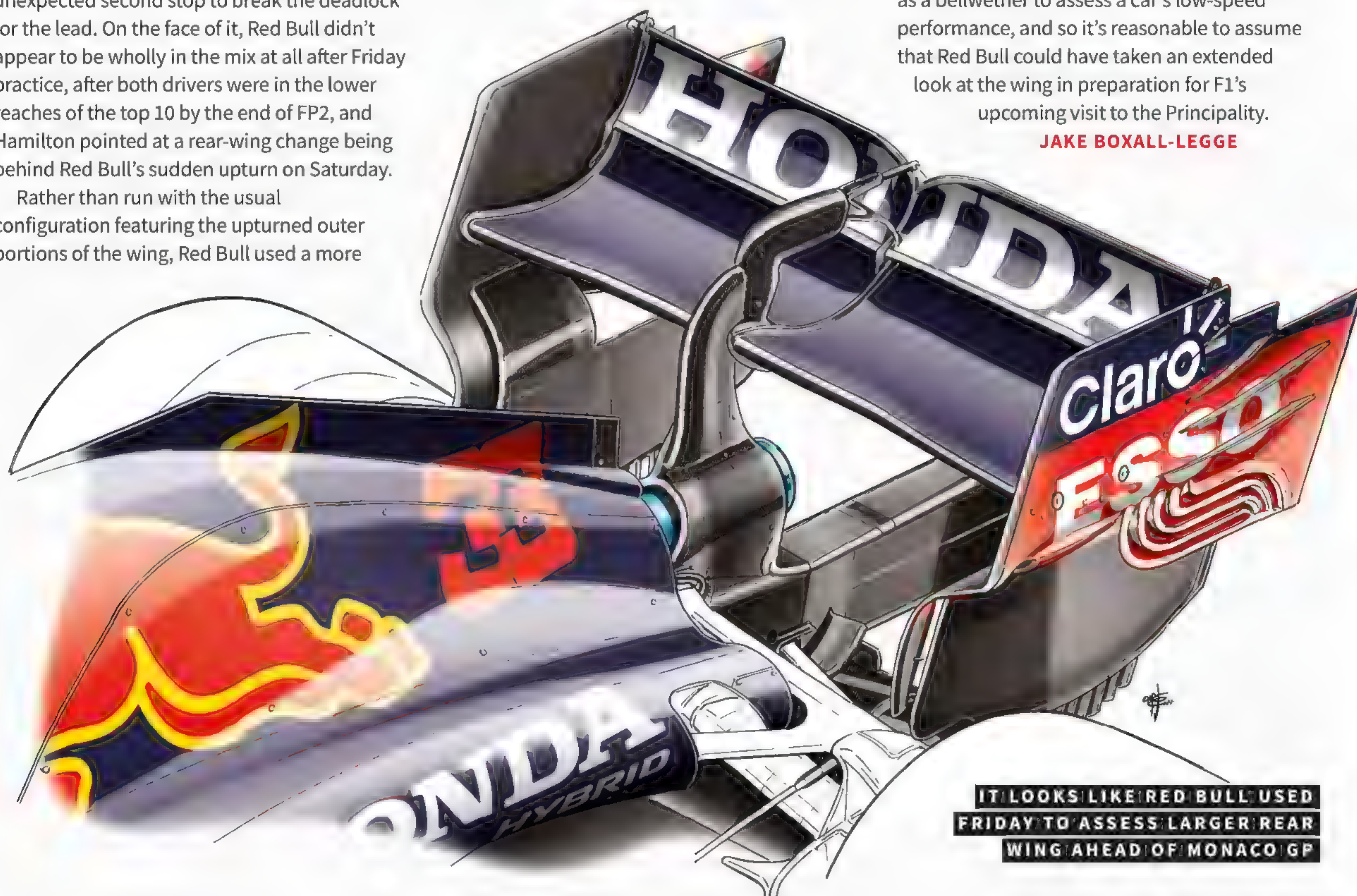
The Spanish Grand Prix was not the first time Max Verstappen has complained about being a sitting duck, but this time Red Bull was completely undone by Lewis Hamilton's unexpected second stop to break the deadlock for the lead. On the face of it, Red Bull didn't appear to be wholly in the mix at all after Friday practice, after both drivers were in the lower reaches of the top 10 by the end of FP2, and Hamilton pointed at a rear-wing change being behind Red Bull's sudden upturn on Saturday.

Rather than run with the usual configuration featuring the upturned outer portions of the wing, Red Bull used a more

conventional rear-wing assembly on Friday, which was larger to generate more downforce at the expense of drag. This gave away, Hamilton reckoned, about 0.3 seconds to the Mercedes

pair, but it seems to have been more of a glimpse of what to expect at Monaco than a potential wing format for Barcelona. The final sector of the Spanish venue is often employed as a bellwether to assess a car's low-speed performance, and so it's reasonable to assume that Red Bull could have taken an extended look at the wing in preparation for F1's upcoming visit to the Principality.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



IT LOOKS LIKE RED BULL USED FRIDAY TO ASSESS LARGER REAR WING AHEAD OF MONACO GP

ASTON MARTIN'S SEARCH FOR LOST DOWNFORCE

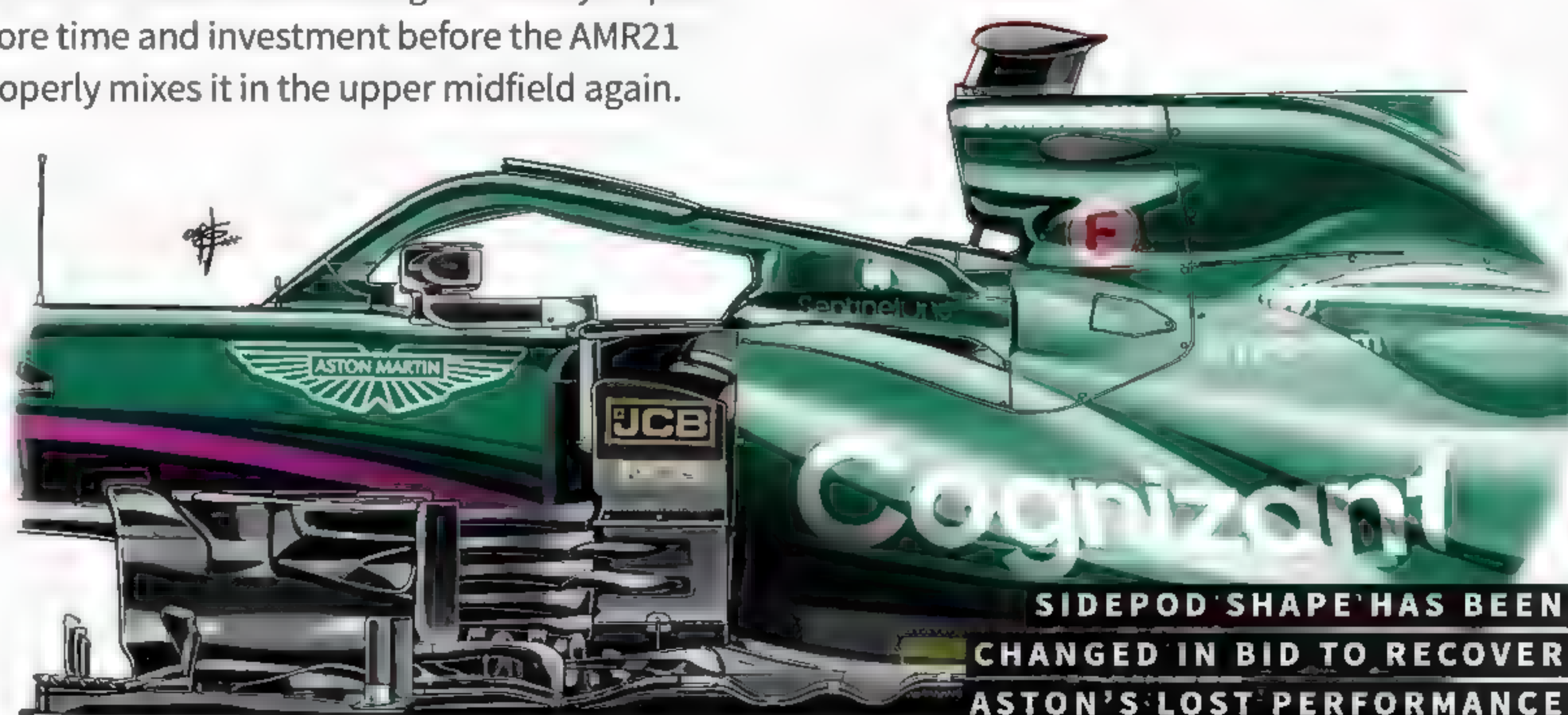
Aston Martin has endured a torrid start to 2021, which has yielded just five points courtesy of Lance Stroll in the opening two races. The incoming Sebastian Vettel has scored none, the team has spent its energy being upset at the floor regulations that stripped the car of its ubiquity within the points-scoring positions, and is struggling to make it into Q3 regularly.

But the squad has made a few baby steps in trying to clear its headaches. One of the first ports of call was in changing the shape of its sidepods, which feature a more distinct slope down to the floor to guide air more cleanly around the rear of the car. It then brought a new floor, with revised ripples along the edge to improve the diffusion of air and introduce more suction underneath, and also works with the fins along the top to help punt airflow outwards.

Losing a big chunk of the floor has hurt the Aston squad, and although it is making waves to address them – both in the design office and in the FIA's voicemail messages – it may require more time and investment before the AMR21 properly mixes it in the upper midfield again.

The car has looked a little more consistent of late, but it's simply lacking pace.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



SIDEPOD SHAPE HAS BEEN CHANGED IN BID TO RECOVER ASTON'S LOST PERFORMANCE

20 Mazepin #9

1m19.807s

18 Schumacher #47

1m19.117s

16 Tsunoda #22

1m18.556s

14 Giovinazzi #99

1m18.356s

12 Gasly #10

1m17.982s

19 Latifi #6

1m19.219s

17 Raikkonen #7

1m18.917s

15 Russell #63

1m19.154s

13 Vettel #5

1m18.079s

11 Stroll #18

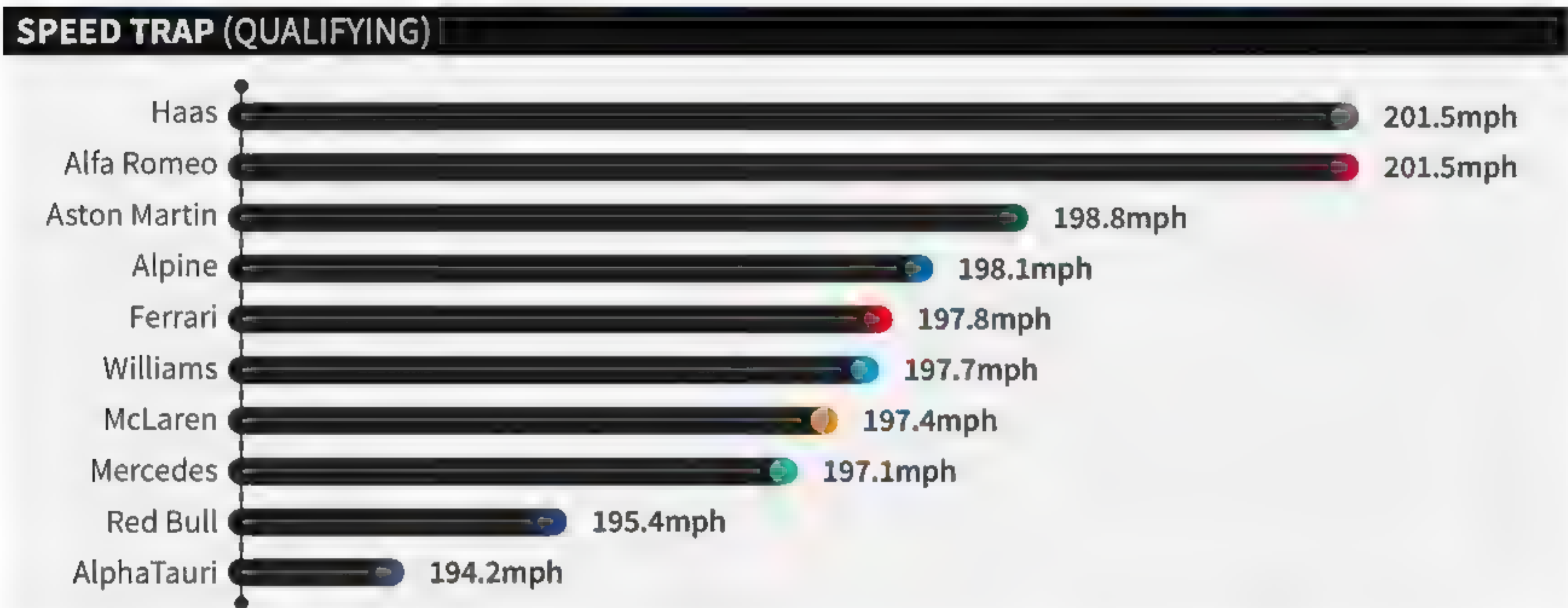
1m17.974s

FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m18.504s	1	Hamilton	1m18.170s	1	Verstappen	1m17.835s
2	Verstappen	1m18.537s	2	Bottas	1m18.309s	2	Hamilton	1m18.070s
3	Hamilton	1m18.627s	3	Leclerc	1m18.335s	3	Leclerc	1m18.308s
4	Norris	1m18.944s	4	Ocon	1m18.466s	4	Sainz	1m18.410s
5	Leclerc	1m18.996s	5	Alonso	1m18.518s	5	Bottas	1m18.423s
6	Sainz	1m19.020s	6	Gasly	1m18.593s	6	Norris	1m18.494s
7	Gasly	1m19.062s	7	Tsunoda	1m18.619s	7	Gasly	1m18.535s
8	Vettel	1m19.234s	8	Sainz	1m18.674s	8	Ricciardo	1m18.582s
9	Perez	1m19.349s	9	Verstappen	1m18.785s	9	Raikkonen	1m18.597s
10	Stroll	1m19.429s	10	Perez	1m18.918s	10	Perez	1m18.606s
11	Tsunoda	1m19.669s	11	Vettel	1m18.947s	11	Alonso	1m18.662s
12	Ocon	1m19.681s	12	Norris	1m19.092s	12	Tsunoda	1m18.673s
13	Giovinazzi	1m19.694s	13	Giovinazzi	1m19.122s	13	Ocon	1m18.700s
14	Ricciardo	1m19.732s	14	Stroll	1m19.134s	14	Stroll	1m18.877s
15	Alonso	1m19.950s	15	Ricciardo	1m19.195s	15	Russell	1m19.005s
16	Latifi	1m20.270s	16	Raikkonen	1m19.213s	16	Giovinazzi	1m19.214s
17	Nissany	1m20.700s	17	Russell	1m19.957s	17	Vettel	1m19.363s
18	Schumacher	1m20.766s	18	Latifi	1m20.046s	18	Latifi	1m19.392s
19	Kubica	1m21.887s	19	Schumacher	1m20.326s	19	Schumacher	1m19.999s
20	Mazepin	1m21.976s	20	Mazepin	1m20.753s	20	Mazepin	1m20.237s

WEATHER Sunny, air 22C track 35-37C

WEATHER Sunny, air 21-22C track 39-41C

WEATHER Sunny, air 23-24C track 37-40C



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Norris	1m17.821s	1	Verstappen	1m16.922s	1	Hamilton	1m16.741s
2	Bottas	1m18.005s	2	Bottas	1m17.142s	2	Verstappen	1m16.777s
3	Leclerc	1m18.041s	3	Hamilton	1m17.166s	3	Bottas	1m16.873s
4	Verstappen	1m18.090s	4	Sainz	1m17.656s	4	Leclerc	1m17.510s
5	Gasly	1m18.190s	5	Perez	1m17.669s	5	Ocon	1m17.580s
6	Perez	1m18.203s	6	Norris	1m17.696s	6	Sainz	1m17.620s
7	Sainz	1m18.205s	7	Leclerc	1m17.717s	7	Ricciardo	1m17.622s
8	Stroll	1m18.241s	8	Ricciardo	1m17.719s	8	Perez	1m17.701s
9	Hamilton	1m18.245s	9	Ocon	1m17.743s	9	Norris	1m18.010s
10	Ricciardo	1m18.264s	10	Alonso	1m17.966s	10	Alonso	1m18.147s
11	Ocon	1m18.281s	11	Stroll	1m17.974s			
12	Alonso	1m18.281s	12	Gasly	1m17.982s			
13	Vettel	1m18.289s	13	Vettel	1m18.079s			
14	Russell	1m18.445s	14	Giovinazzi	1m18.356s			
15	Giovinazzi	1m18.549s	15	Russell	1m19.154s			
16	Tsunoda	1m18.556s						
17	Raikkonen	1m18.917s						
18	Schumacher	1m19.117s						
19	Latifi	1m19.219s						
20	Mazepin	1m19.807s						

WEATHER Sunny and windy, air 24-25C track 43-45C

NEXT RACE

23 MAY

MONACO GP

Monte Carlo

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Hamilton	94	1	1
2 Verstappen	80	1	1
3 Bottas	47	3	1
4 Norris	41	3	7
5 Leclerc	40	4	4
6 Perez	32	4	2
7 Ricciardo	24	6	6
8 Sainz	20	5	5
9 Ocon	10	7	5
10 Gasly	8	7	5
11 Stroll	5	8	10
12 Alonso	5	8	9
13 Tsunoda	2	9	13
14 Raikkonen	0	11	14
15 Giovinazzi	0	12	12
16 Vettel	0	13	10
17 Russell	0	14	11
18 Schumacher	0	16	18
19 Latifi	0	16	14
20 Mazepin	0	17	19

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Mercedes	141
2 Red Bull	112
3 McLaren	65
4 Ferrari	60
5 Alpine	15
6 AlphaTauri	10
7 Aston Martin	5
8 Alfa Romeo	0
9 Williams	0
10 Haas	0

QUALIFYING BATTLE

Hamilton	3	1	Bottas
Perez	1	3	Verstappen
Ricciardo	3	1	Norris
Vettel	1	3	Stroll
Alonso	1	3	Ocon
Leclerc	3	1	Sainz
Gasly	4	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	1	3	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	0	4	Schumacher
Latifi	0	4	Russell

Scores ignore sessions if a driver didn't participate in qualifying or had a serious technical problem

WINS

Hamilton	3	Hamilton	2
Verstappen	1	Bottas	1

POLE POSITIONS

Verstappen	1
------------	---

FASTEST LAPS

Bottas	2
Hamilton	1
Verstappen	1

STARTING GRID

10 Alonso #14 1m18.147s		8 Perez #11 1m17.701s		6 Sainz #55 1m17.620s		4 Leclerc #16 1m17.510s		2 Verstappen #33 1m16.777s	
	9 Norris #4 1m18.010s		7 Ricciardo #3 1m17.622s		5 Ocon #31 1m17.580s		3 Bottas #77 1m16.873s		1 Hamilton #44 1m16.741s

RACE RESULTS ROUND 4/23 (66 LAPS = 191.65 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	1h33m07.680s	12	Su, Mn, Mu
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+15.841s	54	Su, Mn, Sn
3	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+26.610s		Su, Mn, Su
4	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+54.616s		Su, Mn, Su
5	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+1m03.671s		Su, Mn, Su
6	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m13.768s		Su, Mn, Su
7	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+1m14.670s		Su, Mn, Su
8	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	-1lap		Su, Mn, Su
9	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1lap		Su, Mn
10	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1lap		Sn, Mn, Sn
11	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, Su
12	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1lap		Mn, Sn
13	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, Su
14	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, Mn
15	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1lap		Sn, Mu, Su
16	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-1lap		Sn, Mn, Mn, Su
17	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	-1lap		Su, Mn, Su
18	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	-2laps		Sn, Mn, Mn
19	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	-2laps		Sn, Mn, Mn
R	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	6 laps-fuel pressure		Sn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Verstappen	1m18.149s	-	62
2	Bottas	1m19.430s	+1.281s	65
3	Perez	1m19.483s	+1.334s	60
4	Leclerc	1m20.459s	+2.310s	64
5	Hamilton	1m20.665s	+2.516s	54
6	Alonso	1m21.182s	+3.033s	63
7	Norris	1m21.279s	+3.130s	56
8	Gasly	1m21.375s	+3.226s	64
9	Sainz	1m21.568s	+3.419s	53
10	Ricciardo	1m21.853s	+3.704s	60
11	Stroll	1m22.607s	+4.458s	47
12	Schumacher	1m22.637s	+4.488s	54
13	Giovinazzi	1m22.802s	+4.653s	42
14	Vettel	1m22.820s	+4.671s	56
15	Raikkonen	1m22.868s	+4.719s	54
16	Latifi	1m22.905s	+4.756s	57
17	Russell	1m23.208s	+5.059s	30
18	Ocon	1m23.311s	+5.162s	46
19	Mazepin	1m24.040s	+5.891s	45
20	Tsunoda	1m24.825s	+6.676s	5

WEATHER Overcast, air 22-24C track 30-36C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 123.48mph. FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 133.82mph.

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

FP1

ROY NISSANY replaced
RUSSELL at Williams
ROBERT KUBICA replaced
RAIKKONEN at Alfa Romeo

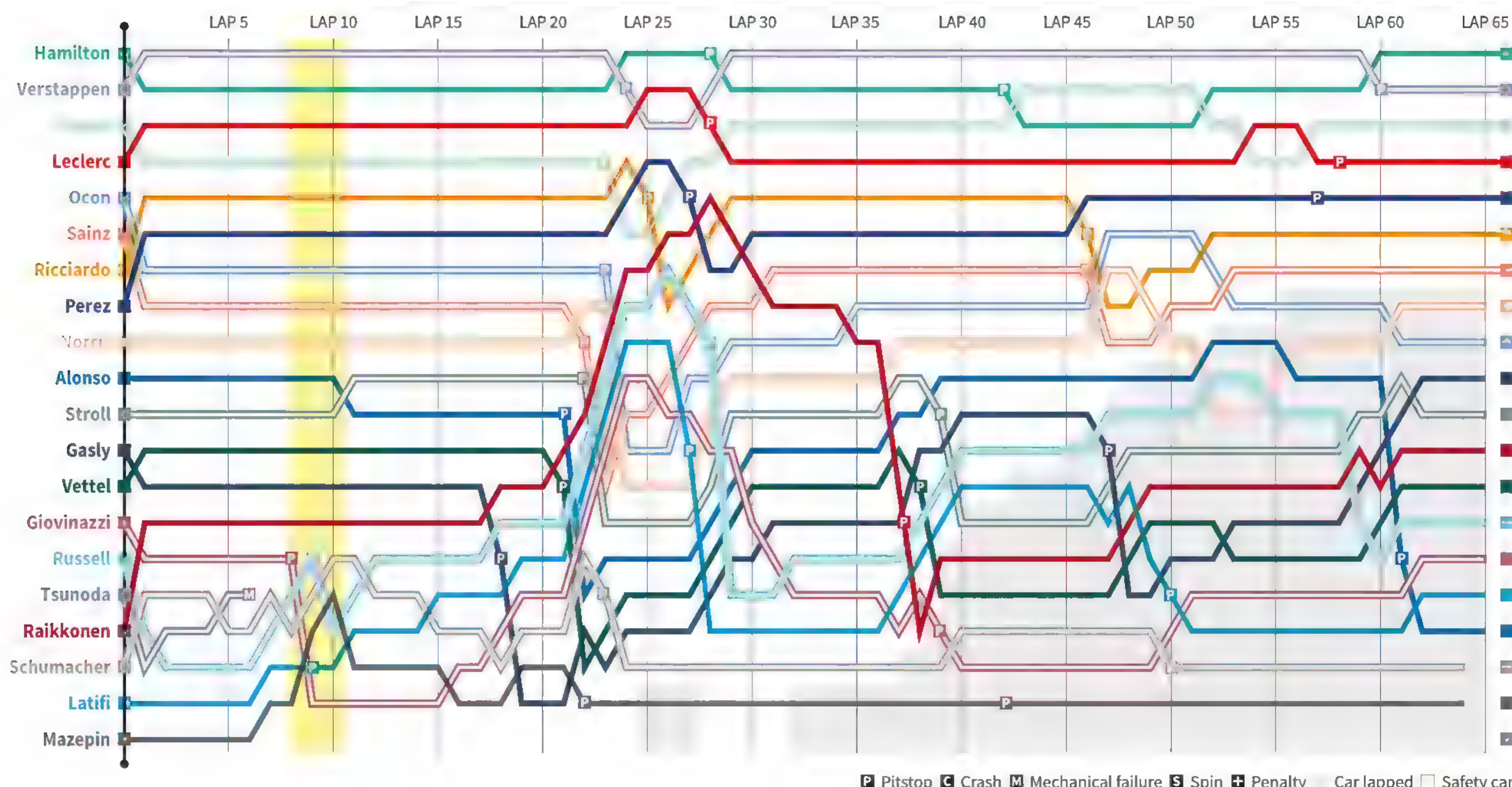
GRID PENALTIES

MAZEPIN Three-place
penalty and one licence
point for impeding Norris
in qualifying

RACE PENALTIES

GASLY Five-second
penalty and one licence
point for being out of
position at the start

LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin H Penalty L Car lapped SC Safety car

LECLERC'S EXCELLENCE EARNs HIM FULL MARKS

The Ferrari star is our sole top scorer, although race-winner Hamilton and McLaren's battler Ricciardo just miss out by a whisker

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

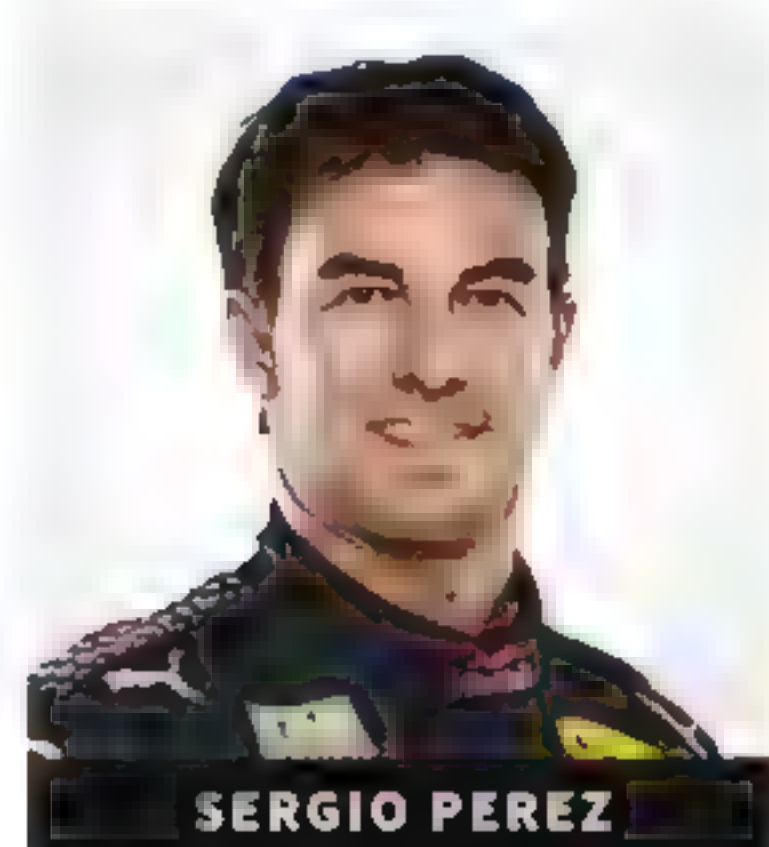
9 Very close to a maximum score, but just misses out because of his hesitation in not closing off Verstappen's run to the inside at Turn 1. Was excellent from there, harrying Verstappen while keeping his tyres alive in his first stint, then executing the perfect chase in his third.



VALTTERI BOTTAS

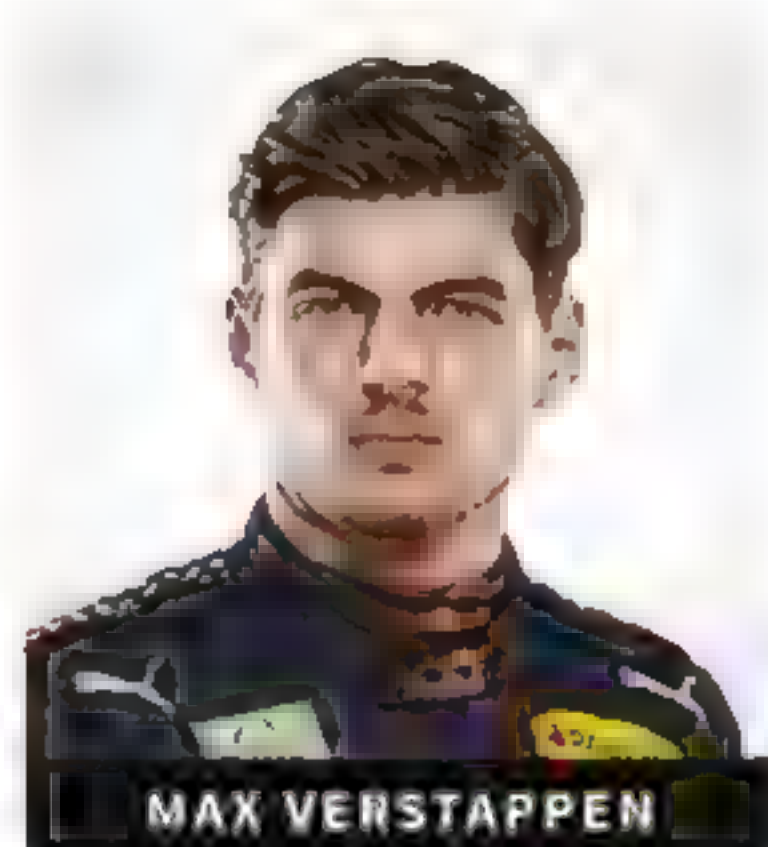
7 Even without the Turn 10 mistake on his fastest Q3 lap, he still wouldn't have beaten Verstappen, so we're not penalising him for qualifying behind the Red Bull. His problem was being overtaken by Leclerc on the first lap, which compromised his race massively either side of the safety car.

RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ

4 While Perez gets sympathy for the shoulder pain he suffered in qualifying, this score reflects the massive gap to Verstappen and what his absence from the lead fight cost Red Bull. Spun needlessly in Q3 and later ended up behind four slower cars. Did make a good start, but just took too long passing Ricciardo.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

8 Two minor mistakes add up to cost him here. Delivered his best qualifying lap on the first Q3 runs, then delightfully punchy at the first corner. But as he "called himself in", in the words of his team boss, he cost himself a second. Then locked up on his out-lap and appeared to damage his left front.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO

9 An excellent weekend at a track where Ferrari was faster than McLaren. Just falls short of a maximum because of his part in missing the Q3 cutoff for a final lap. In the race he made a strong start, then had to spend most of his time defending against Perez and then Sainz.



LANDO NORRIS

6 Was unlucky that the Mazepin Q1 incident cost him an extra set of softs, but did damage his car going wide at Campsa on his first Q3 run on old tyres. Charged well to beat Ocon late on, but is also marked down for late defence against Sainz, for which he was rightly shown the black-and-white flag.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

4 Scored down for qualifying behind his teammate and Gasly's slower AlphaTauri, but did at least win their long tussle on lap one. Struggled to keep his tyres alive and blamed this particularly on getting caught behind Raikkonen. Even with Aston's struggles for pace, he should not be losing to an Alfa.



LANCE STROLL

6 After touching Alonso in their first-lap scrap, he made a great pass after the restart. Comes down on his score for losing out to Gasly's slower, penalty addled AlphaTauri by the finish. Not a lot he could do in the late Turns 1/2 clash with Alonso, and smartly moved to let the Alpine back ahead.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO

6 Q3 traffic shenanigans meant he started his sole new softs run with low temperatures, which he said explained the gap to Ocon. Drove well on the tough one-stopper. Just couldn't avoid a second stop, before which his old tyres contributed to the clash with Stroll.



ESTEBAN OCON

8 Beat a faster Ferrari in qualifying, while suspecting a misfire cost time on his final run. Lost a spot to Ricciardo at the start, but from there drove well on the difficult one-stopper. Was the lead one-stopper home, showing excellent tyre management skills to hang onto ninth.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

10 Earns the maximum, despite not delivering his best sectors on his fastest Q3 lap, for two reasons. One, he still took fourth and beat a Red Bull; and two, because of his incredible first-lap pass on Bottas at Turn 3. Then managed his pace on softs and mediums excellently.



CARLOS SAINZ JR

6 The main issue was qualifying behind Ocon's slower Alpine. Then a slower start than Ricciardo's meant he was boxed in behind the Alpine at Turn 1, and he lost out to Perez too as a result. From there he charged hard, but Saturday/start combo meant he came home behind a slower McLaren.



ALPHATAURI



7 Earns an extra point because of his excellent recovery drive, but made life so much harder for himself with the penalty for overshooting his grid box. The additional penalty time at his stop meant he had to battle back from last, but did rise the order well and put in some good late passes.



4 This score is all about his under-performance in qualifying, given a loss of fuel pressure suddenly stopped his race after just six laps. Was furious to be edged out of Q1 by 0.007s, which was followed by some unwise comments about his AT02 that he then apologised for.

ALFA ROMEO



6 He had work to do to recover his score after qualifying – he was so far adrift of Giovinazzi in Q1 that he was lucky not to be outqualified by Schumacher's Haas. Was brilliant on the one-stopper after a strong first lap. Also showed very well mixing it with faster cars late on.



8 A case of what might have been. Beat Russell nicely in qualifying and was so much faster than his team-mate. Lost ground at the start, then had the safety car pitstop disaster. Then confusion over following the safety car delta. Recovered a reasonable result with two long final stints.

HAAS



4 Several factors lead to this score on a weekend where he picked up another penalty. The first was that penalty, for impeding Norris in Q1, which could easily have been avoided. Then there was the 0.69s gap to his team-mate in qualifying, and then the 49.862s between them in the race.



7 Another encouraging performance, particularly with his effort in qualifying to beat Latifi's Williams. Two errors combine to cost him here: not hooking up his best Q1 sectors when it mattered, otherwise he might have beaten Raikkonen too; and overshooting his pitbox at his first stop.

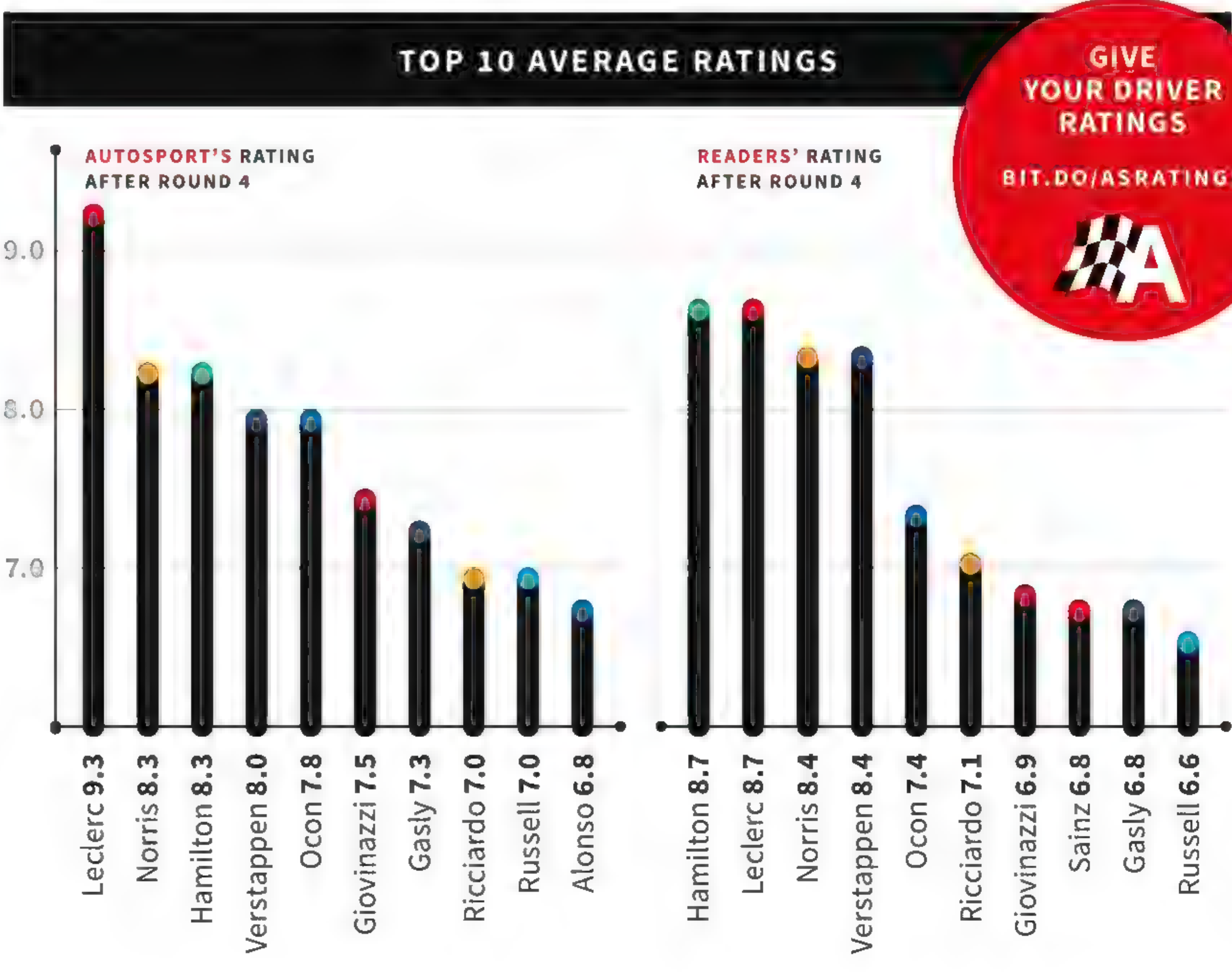
WILLIAMS



5 Even though his team felt his defeat to Schumacher in qualifying was down to the rookie's improved performance better reflecting where his car can reach, the pace difference to the Haas is still significant and so his score reflects being beaten to 18th in qualifying.



8 Did very well to get out of Q1 again, which Williams thought would be difficult. Stopping under the safety car put him onto an effective one-stopper and he tracked Alonso who was trying a real one. Hung on to the top 10's fringes before the pack with fresher tyres ate him up.



Join MAX'S ORANGE ARMY



DUTCH GRAND PRIX ZANDVOORT CIRCUIT

3rd - 5th September 2021

As Dutch motorsport fans finally get a home Grand Prix, here are our top 5 things to check out in Amsterdam on race weekend.

Max Verstappen's devoted Orange Army have been a regular sight in recent Formula 1 seasons. The Dutch fans are easy to spot in the grandstands; they're usually behind a wall of orange smoke, bouncing to the sound of Eurobeat loud enough to register on the Richter scale.

This coming season, they'll be rewarded for following their hero and touring the continent with the first Dutch Grand Prix in over 35 years. And they'll be hoping to celebrate the first home win for a Dutchman in Formula 1 history.

The race returns to Circuit Zandvoort, an undulating circuit on the sandy dunes of the Dutch coast. A classic track from previous eras, Zandvoort is characterised by its steep banked final turn – a feature rarely seen in modern Formula 1. It will prove a unique test for the drivers, and a real spectacle for the fans.

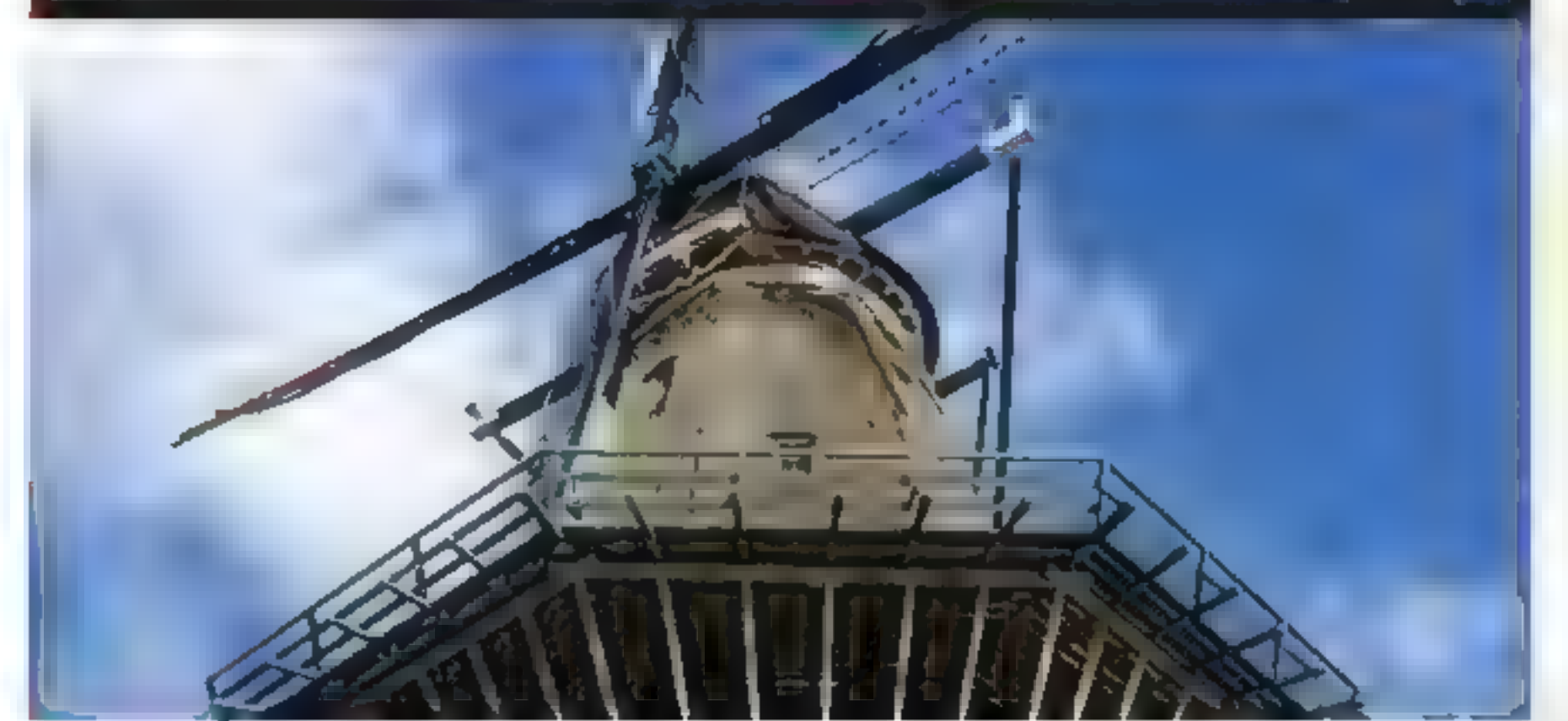
But those fans have more than just the race to enjoy. Zandvoort is less than half an hour by train from one of Europe's top city destinations, Amsterdam. And the Dutch capital itself is only an hour's flight from London, making it one of the most accessible races on the calendar for UK racing fans.

With a selection of ticket and Amsterdam hotel packages on offer for the race weekend, we're getting you prepared with five things you'll need to check out between catching the action on track.



Brouwerij 't IJ

2



Amsterdam is home to one of the world's most famous beers, and the Heineken Experience is probably one of the city's most Instagrammed attractions. You'll learn the history on a tour of the high-tech museum and, sure, you'll learn how to pull the perfect pint, but there'll be plenty of Heineken to drink at the circuit on race day.

For an authentic Dutch beer experience, we recommend heading to Brouwerij 't IJ. Set up in 1985 beside the iconic De Gooyer windmill, the brewery specialises in experimental beers. There's a self-service tap room on the site of their original brewery, and for the beer geeks among us, they offer whistle-stop 20-minute tours of the brewery on weekends, too.

Food Hallen

3



Delicious Dutch delicacies include Poffertjes (small baked pancakes), pickled herring and Bitterballen (deep-fried meatballs). And you'll find them all at De Hallen; a hipster-savvy street food market with 20+ vendors serving up meals late into the night.

You'll do well to resist some of the dishes from around the world, though. With Asian-Mexican fusion, DimSum, Sushi, and Vietnamese among some of the cuisines on offer, our challenge to you is to find dishes from as many 2021 Grand Prix hosts as possible...



Johan Cruyff Arena

1

Renamed in honour of the Dutch great in 2018, the Johan Cruyff Arena is an essential visit for any sport's fan. The home of European football greats Ajax, the stadium hosted the Champions League final in 1998, and more recently was the venue for Chelsea's 2013 Europa League victory.

A tour of the stadium includes a walk through the players' tunnel onto the pitch, a photo op in the locker room, and a virtual reality experience, placing you in the boots of a player on matchday.

5 EXTRA THINGS TO DO IN AMSTERDAM



VISIT OUR BLOG FOR MORE ON DUTCH GP

Canal Cruise

3

If you choose to spend all three days at the circuit, you may not have all the time in the world to see the sights. Taking to the city's historic canal ring is a smart solution.

There's an experience for all racing fans. The 100 Highlights Cruise takes you through a number of the canals, taking in the city's beauty spots and elegant old centre. Dinner cruises are popular for those who want dinner with a view, but we reckon racing fans might prefer the Pizza Cruise for a relaxed meal and beers after a day at the circuit.

Van Gogh Museum

4



Two million visitors annually flock to see the work of the Netherlands' most famous personality: artist Vincent Van Gogh. If you need a more leisurely excursion during the race weekend, you could stroll around this collection of 600 original works from the painter.

EXPERIENCE THE DUTCH F1 GRAND PRIX WITH MOTORSPORT TICKETS

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- **FOR AN EXTRA £243** upgrade to Hairpin 2 Grandstand (Turn 10) race tickets

2 FULL WEEKEND RACE PACKAGE RRP £1,727

- 3 day Eastside 2A Grandstand (Turn 11) race tickets
- 4 nights Ibis Amsterdam Centre - 3-star Hotel (arriving Thurs)
- Central Amsterdam location including breakfast each morning

3 PREMIER RACE PACKAGE RRP £2,227

- 2 day Pit Grandstand race tickets (Sat & Sun)
- 3 nights Kimpton de Witt 4-star Boutique Hotel (arriving Thursday)
- Central Amsterdam location including breakfast each morning

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Da Costa ignited
his title defence with
victory in Monaco
thriller



DA COSTA CLEARS THE HANGOVER IN THE CHAMPAGNE STATE

A frenetic race decided by stunning overtakes on Formula E's graduation to the full Monaco circuit came at the right time to lift the mood in camp

MATT KEW

PHOTOGRAPHY



motorsport
IMAGES

It's felt as though Formula E has been nursing a hangover during the first half of this season. The improvised six races in Berlin last August to conclude the interrupted 2019-20 campaign acted like a nine-day bender and since then the series has come across a touch bleary-eyed. Three double-header events, split by barely enough time to abide by the UK government's requirement to self-isolate for 10 days upon returning to the country, has left little room for respite to shift the heavy heads in 2021. The paddock swapped its pre-pandemic optimism for an altogether flatter mood with questions asked over what return manufacturers are getting for their millions, even withstanding the body blow COVID has dealt.

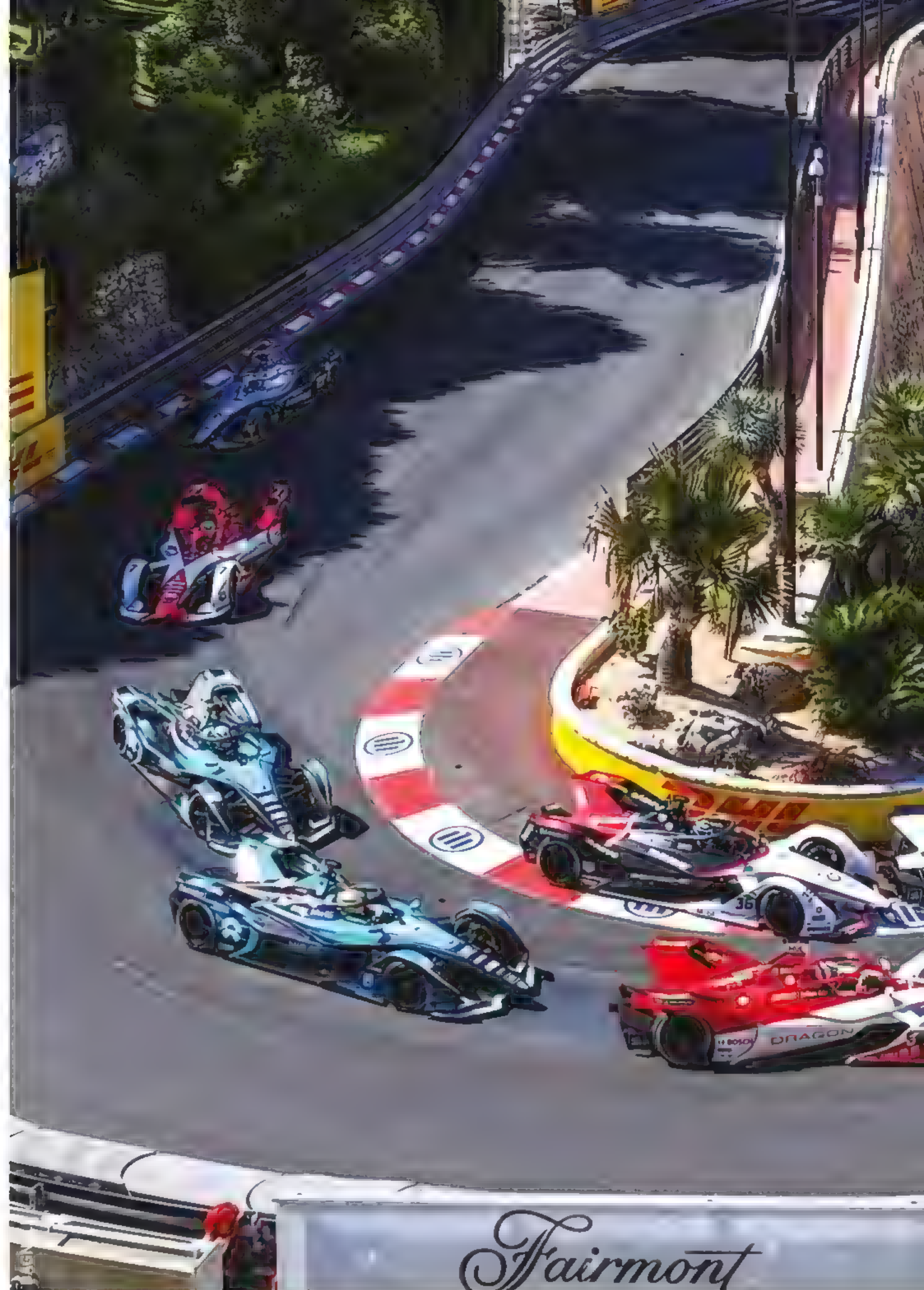
A faltering start to life with full FIA World Championship status was compounded by the Valencia debacle last month. Mass retirements and disqualifications as drivers exceeded energy limits wasn't a good look. The governing body attempting to place blame on its popular reigning champion and long-time race leader Antonio Felix da Costa didn't help matters. Formula E trying to justify events as a showcase of the need to lift and coast was cumbersome at best.

The series needed to bounce back from what was quite possibly its nadir. And that was just the lucky hand Formula E was dealt in Monaco as a thrilling contest last weekend helped alleviate the irritability. In some style, da Costa finally earned the first victory of his title defence in a race that featured six swaps for the lead. This came on the championship's maiden use of the full grand prix circuit, where overtaking opportunities are generally thought to be sparing in the context of Formula 1.

It was a fine showcase of how far Formula E has come. Having rocked up to the principality for a European debut in May 2015, back then two cars were required per driver just to complete the race on a shortened 1.1-mile circuit that missed out the stretch from Beau Rivage to the harbour. Almost six years to the day from that foray in the champagne state, the warm Mediterranean Sea air put the wind not only in the sails of the glistening yachts crowded into Port Hercules, but also back into the championship itself.

Last-minute tweaks to the layout could have got proceedings off to a rocky start. The series was set to use the faster and more open set-up of Sainte Devote, with the electric cars ready to bask in some history and follow the first-corner route used for the maiden Monaco Grand Prix in 1929. However, not unrelated to April events in Spain, the tighter F1 configuration was sanctioned to provide a bigger braking zone to give drivers every opportunity to recoup energy before the deceptively steep climb up to Massenet.

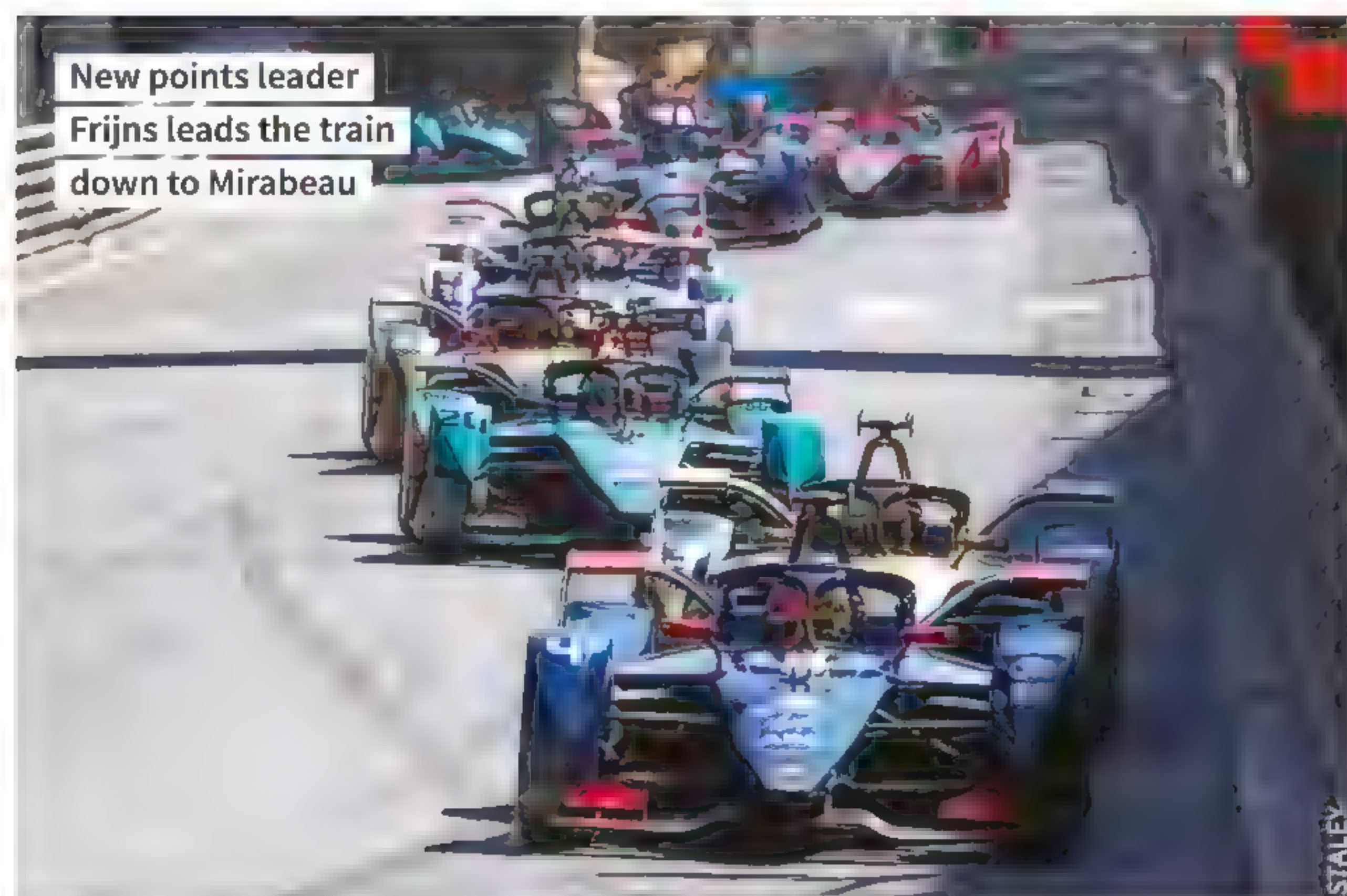
Similarly, the attack mode activation loop was moved from >>



Loews Hairpin to the outside of Casino Square, while the kerb at the second apex of the Nouvelle Chicane was repositioned to greatly tighten the corner. The expectation was that these late changes would wreak havoc with the teams' simulator preparation. But with seven drivers having contested the World Endurance Championship curtain raiser at Spa the weekend prior, their homework had been delayed and so the chagrin was kept to a minimum.

As Stoffel Vandoorne explained: "This time it was actually beneficial to go to the simulator quite late before the event because the updates on the circuit came quite late. I would say [the tight turnaround between events] in the end was almost a benefit."

Da Costa reckoned the controversy in Valencia had made Formula E "the joke of the week". But he was the one laughing at the end of qualifying. Arriving in Monaco, the DS Techeetah driver only had two points finishes to show from six races. That meant plying his trade in group three. Although track evolution was minimal compared to the dusty streets of Saudi Arabia and the dry lines that emerged in Italy, he used his later run to secure the

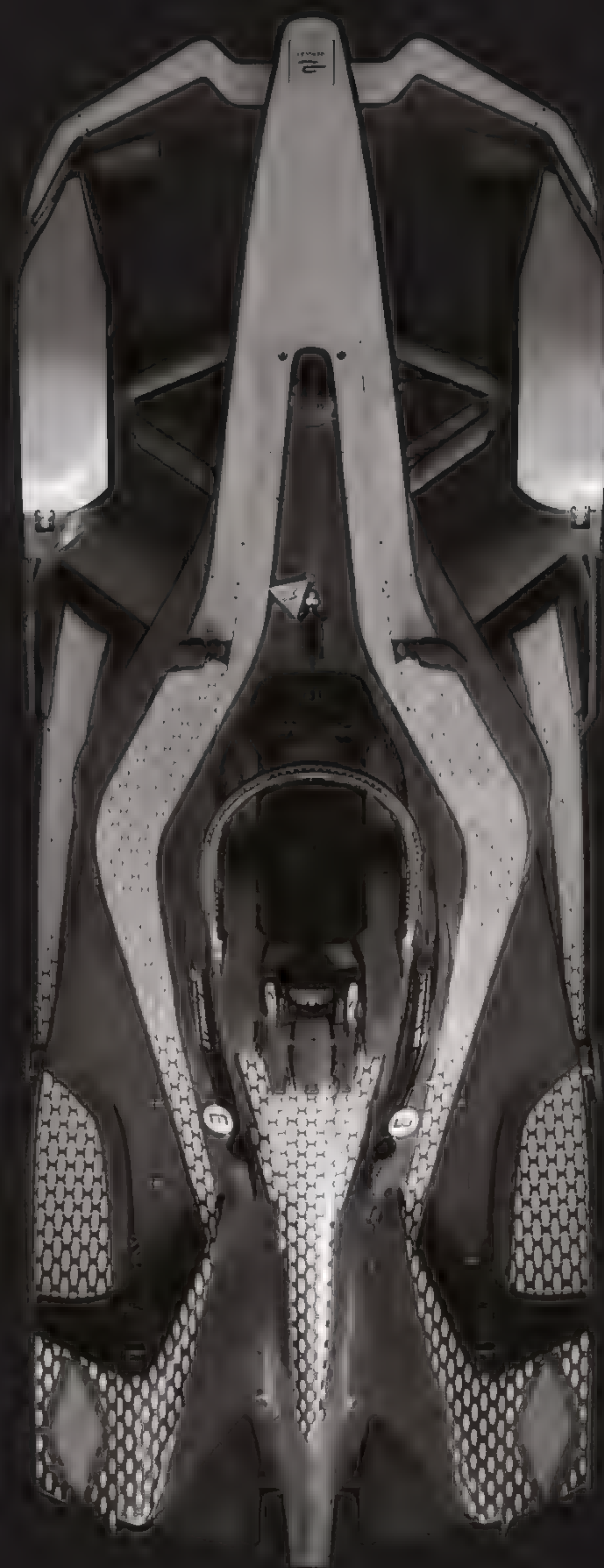




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fourth-best time and earn a spot in the top-six superpole shootout.

There was little to split the fastest four from their final flying laps, just 0.059s. Robin Frijns did his heavy lifting in the last sector to claw back a tenth and land second on the grid. Jaguar Racing rival Mitch Evans was wild for the duration but pieced it together for third, while da Costa nosed in front to claim his sixth series pole by a 0.012s whisker. "I went at like 99% because I'm just not in a place right now, with the way we've built our season up to here, to really go full beans and risk touching a wall," said the Portuguese, who reckoned he channelled the same focus that had borne Macau GP wins in 2012 and 2016. "I was comfortable with what I needed to do. I said, 'I'm not going to look for lap time anymore'.

"All week I have been wanting this super bad... putting so much pressure on myself. I've been working mentally to keep that under control one step at a time. We've been trying to kickstart this season since we had a pretty slow start. This is where we either throw our towel on the floor or we pick ourselves back up."

The towel da Costa needed before long was to dry himself after leaping off the 10-metre diving board above the swimming pool in celebration of his exquisitely executed triumph. A smooth launch and maintaining a tight line against the inside barrier gave da Costa a short run into Sainte Devote where he found breathing space to maintain first. Evans, meanwhile, tried to bully himself up the inside of Frijns but thought better of it, emitting a small puff of blue smoke from the fronts as he briefly locked up and settled into third.

Aside from a clumsy run through Leows Hairpin — Alexander Sims was tapped under braking by Pascal Wehrlein and then clonked into the wall by the Porsche driver after a brief coming together with Sebastien Buemi — the opening lap was of little note. It was the cars simply passing through the famous setting that provided the spectacle rather than any major on-track skirmishes, appearing to put the race on course for a procession. That lasted only as far as lap four, when Frijns propelled himself out of Anthony Noghes to tuck into da Costa's slipstream and then throw his Envision Virgin Racing machine down the inside for the lead into Sainte Devote. >>



As is par for the course in Formula E, the battle for victory then descended into an attack mode strategy game. Da Costa was the first to duck off-line for his 35kW boost and slotted into fourth behind team-mate Jean-Eric Vergne. When the two-time champion attempted an outside pass on Evans into Nouvelle Chicane and the pair brushed bodywork and slowed, da Costa pounced back for second place but in the delay was now 2.3s adrift of Frijns.

The Dutch racer used that cushion to activate his attack mode. He deployed the extra power to good effect to recover first place, after losing track position, with a deft move into Sainte Devote. The places were then reversed once more as Frijns didn't hang about to take his second boost, handing da Costa the advantage. But it only took half a lap for Frijns to sweep back at the exit of the tunnel and then streak into a lead of 2.5s. Da Costa responded with his second attack mode and smartly hung on around the outside of Mirabeau to hold the inside line in Leows as he fought off Evans for third. He was then gifted second place as Vergne ran off-line to activate his boost but missed the gate and so lost time to no avail.

The runaway star of last season, da Costa then used his power hike to reel in the leader, thumbed the fanboost button and carried masses of speed out of the tunnel to return the favour on Frijns with a flying overtake into the Nouvelle Chicane. But as the race grew into a breathless fight for the lead, the top two were left prey to the attack mode-enhanced Evans with 16 minutes to play.

The Monaco resident, more accustomed to navigating the streets on his moped, dispatched Frijns around the outside on the main straight to tuck into the tow of da Costa. And while there were several contenders for the overtake of the race up this point, Evans blew them all away. He ran side by side with the DS Techeetah

machine and then sliced with millimetric precision through the Beau Rivage kink to complete a simply stunning move.

"I wasn't really expecting it but just the pace difference on attack mode going up the hill, it was huge," said Evans. "I wasn't really sure what Antonio was going to do, so I went with my gut... we raced hard but fair. Maybe other drivers would have made it more dangerous for me, but he gave me room and I just squeezed by."

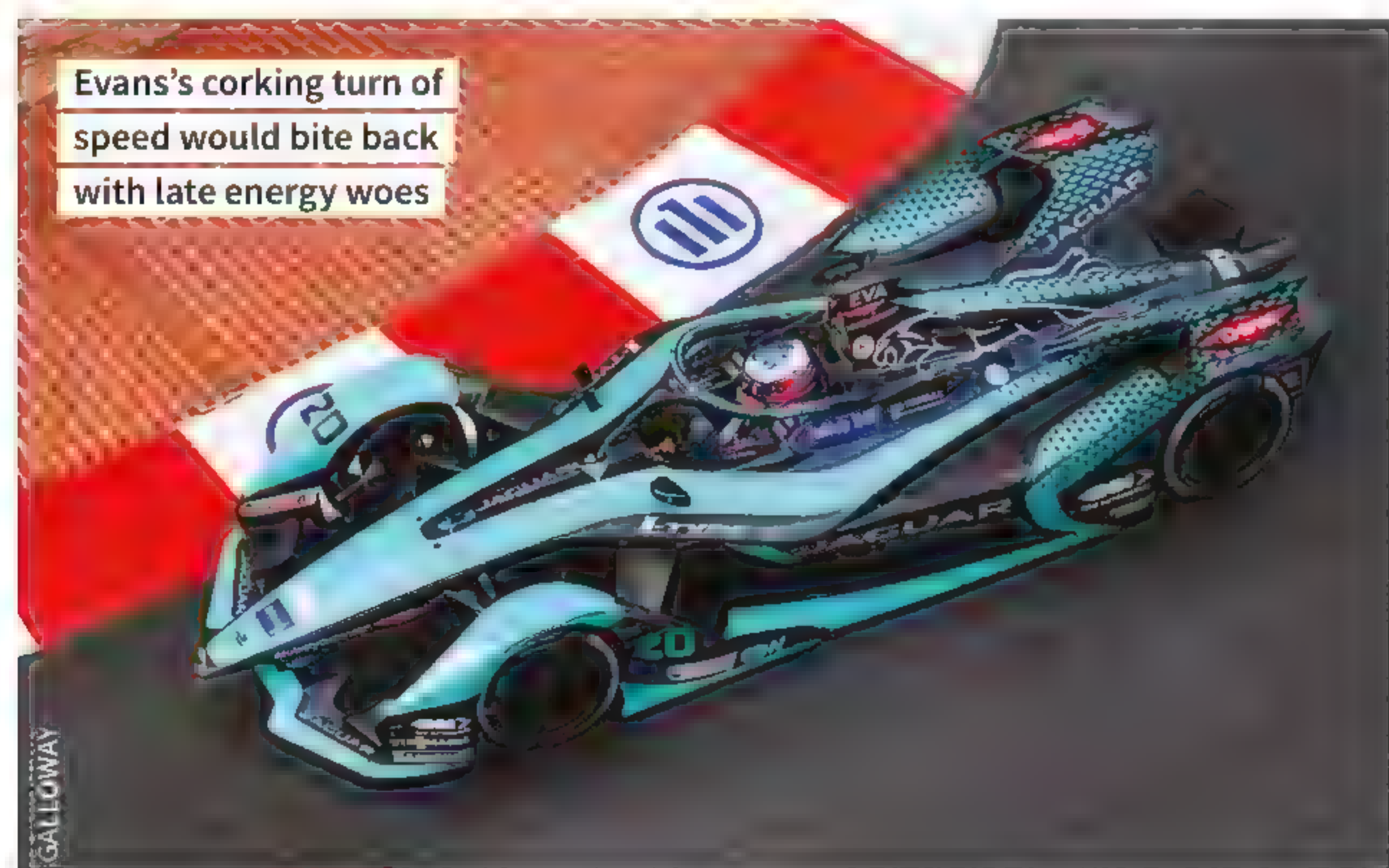
Evans would soon come to rue that turn of blinding speed as he fell behind his rivals in the battle to preserve energy. A safety car was called for three laps when Rene Rast ran out of room in his dice with Nick Cassidy and understeered into the barrier. Evans led away at the restart and a stricken Nyck de Vries on the approach to Tabac provided a yellow flag breather to help the Kiwi keep hold on to track position. It proved insufficient, however. Evans's speed dropped more and more as he had to conserve energy, handing da Costa the opportunity he needed to be the last of the late brakiers and slingshot up the outside for the victory on the run into the Nouvelle Chicane. A massive lock-up couldn't hold him back as he somehow managed to haemorrhage enough speed and make the apex on the final lap to earn the spoils in sterling fashion. Title defence ignited.

"You feel it here from your gut," da Costa said. "The whole week, it's something there. There's so many details that led to me being the lucky one. I went for the move on that last lap in Turn 12 thinking 'OK, I'll go for it, but it will probably not work. He's got enough to cover me.' But it was just enough to get him."

Evans slowed to such an extent, conceding second on the line to new and entirely deserved points leader Frijns by just 0.024s, that da Costa ran 2.8s clear. But that, and the top six (completed by Vergne, Maximilian Guenther and Oliver Rowland) classifying where they had started, belied what was an emphatic electric classic.

In such a setting and after a truly entertaining encounter, the fug in the paddock lifted no end. The championship can dine out on the superlative action last weekend ahead of its six-week lie-in until Mexico. That positive sentiment would do well to carry over for the double-header visit to the Autodromo Miguel E Abed near Puebla. Monaco's marina vistas will be swapped for a flat oval with a fiddly infield route. It also marks the return of a permanent circuit with the energy management turmoil of Valencia fresh in the memory.

With memos reportedly sent about the need to travel in and out of the circuit in convoy to improve security for personnel, the former World Touring Car venue faces an uphill battle to worm its way into the heart of the paddock. But if the on-track competition can hold a candle to that on display last weekend, then Formula E might wave goodbye to its hangover before supping Long Island Iced Teas in New York in July. ❧



MONACO ENDS THE MERCEDES MONOPOLY

Mercedes was caught in a crossfire after Valencia. Celebrations for a 1-3 finish for drivers Nyck de Vries and Stoffel Vandoorne were lost amid the anger of the energy management crisis as teams blamed the FIA and the governing body fought back.

De Vries was under-consuming energy, Vandoorne stymied by being dumped to the back of grid after snaring pole when a tyre barcode was incorrectly recorded. It was perhaps more the 'unluck' of others rather than a strategy masterclass that meant Mercedes departed Spain with a 23-point cushion over Jaguar atop the standings.

But this had also been built with supreme wins in Saudi Arabia and Italy, the Silver Arrow machines victorious at each of the past four tracks visited, stretching back to Berlin last year.

That run of form stopped in its tracks in Monaco, however, to create a day that team principal Ian James billed as "painful". He added: "We simply can't afford to lose any more ground".

De Vries had his qualifying run botched when he caught a switch on the steering wheel, knocking the car out of the top 250kW power mode and the subsequent recalibration took 30s to activate, by which time he was down and out.

Vandoorne then retired with a rear braking fault before his team-mate headed for an early bath having "basically triggered a shutdown". In good humour he added: "I don't know how I did it, otherwise I wouldn't have done it!"

Testament to the team's potency, it still holds a slender two-point advantage after the third double non-score of the season. But it still marks an ominous repeat of the avoidable operational errors that blighted its 2019-20 haul.

James told Autosport pre-season: "Our rookie year is now behind us. We cannot make errors twice." He cited a no-blame culture as the way to press on.

But the cracks haven't quite been filled. Bad for the team, brilliant for avoiding the potential monopoly that looked on the cards ahead of a run through Casino Square.



L-r: Frijns, da Costa and Evans toast podium

RESULTS: ROUND 4/8, MONTE CARLO (MCO), 8 MAY (26 LAPS – 53.604 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE21	47m20.697s
2	Robin Frijns (NLD)	Envision Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE07	+2.848s
3	Mitch Evans (NZL)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-TYPE 5	+2.872s
4	Jean-Eric Vergne (FRA)	DS Techeetah / DSE-Tense FE21	+3.120s
5	Maximilian Guenther (DEU)	BMW Andretti / BMW iFE.21	+3.270s
6	Oliver Rowland (GBR)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM03	+3.865s
7	Sam Bird (GBR)	Jaguar Racing / Jaguar I-TYPE 5	+4.150s
8	Nick Cassidy (NZL)	Envision Virgin Racing / Audi e-tron FE07	+4.752s
9	Alex Lynn (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M7Electro	+5.759s
10	Lucas di Grassi (BRA)	Audi / Audi e-tron FE07	+6.225s
11	Sebastien Buemi (CHE)	Nissan e.dams / Nissan IM03	+6.567s
12	Edoardo Mortara (CHE)	Venturi Racing / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	+7.097s
13	Norman Nato (FRA)	Venturi Racing / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	+8.507s
14	Tom Blomqvist (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 001	+9.240s
15	Sergio Sette Camara (BRA)	Dragon Penske Autosport / Penske EV-5	+9.499s
16	Jake Dennis (GBR)	BMW Andretti / BMW iFE.21	+9.822s
17	Andre Lotterer (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	+10.503s
18	Nico Muller (CHE)	Dragon Penske Autosport / Penske EV-5	+11.450s
19	Oliver Turvey (GBR)	NIO 333 / NIO 333 001	+12.067s
R	Nyck de Vries (NLD)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	23 laps-car shutdown
R	Pascal Wehrlein (DEU)	Porsche / Porsche 99X Electric	21 laps-accident
R	Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL)	Mercedes / Mercedes EQ Silver Arrow 02	21 laps-brakes
R	Rene Rast (DEU)	Audi / Audi e-tron FE07	18 laps-accident
R	Alexander Sims (GBR)	Mahindra Racing / Mahindra M7Electro	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 67.932mph. **Fastest lap** Vandoorne 1m34.428s, 78.601mph.

SUPERPOLE 1 da Costa 1m31.317s; 2 Frijns 1m31.329s; 3 Evans 1m31.368s; 4 Vergne 1m31.376s; 5 Guenther 1m32.039s; 6 Rowland.

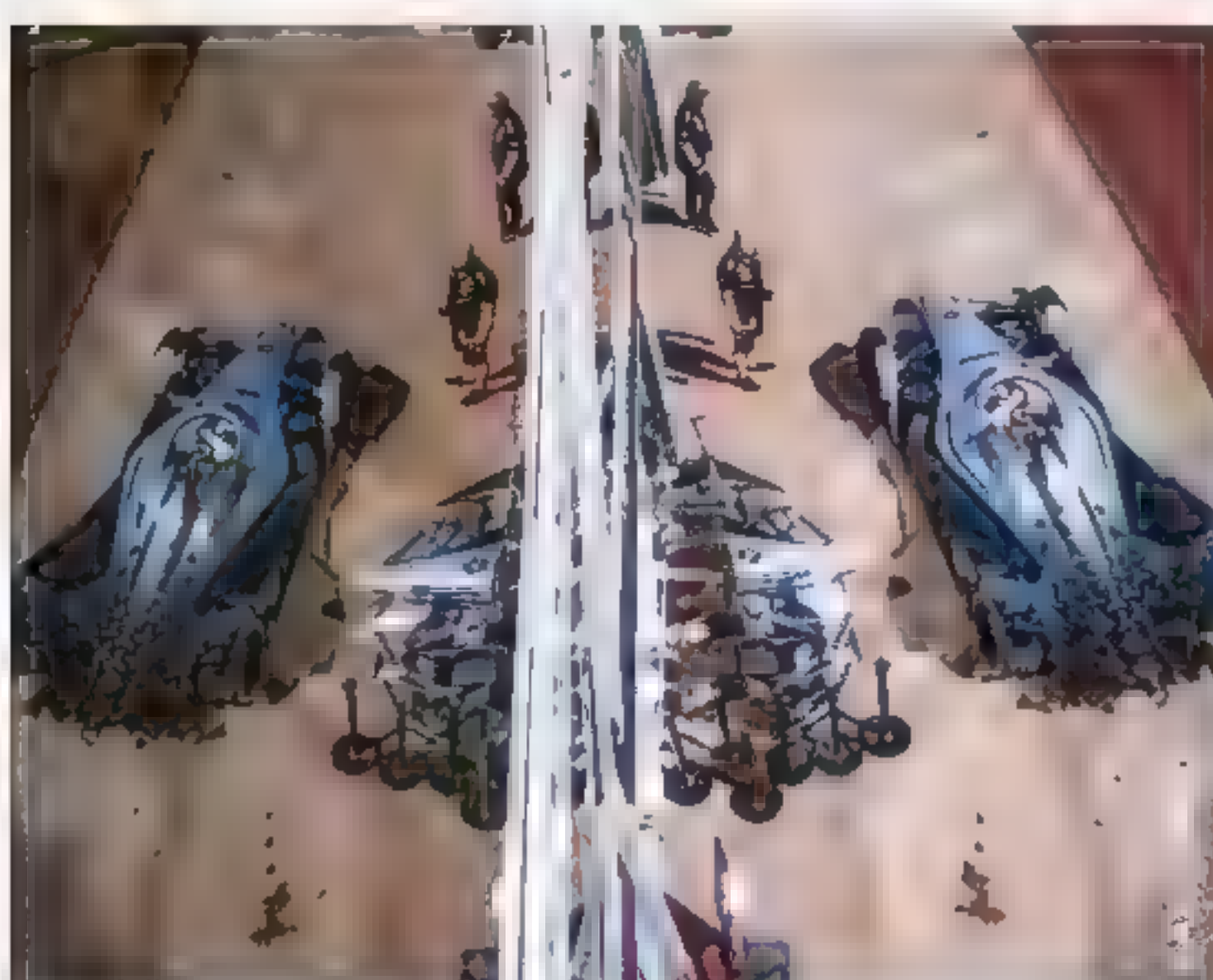
QUALIFYING 1 Frijns 1m31.638s; 2 Evans 1m31.772s; 3 Guenther 1m31.817s; 4 da Costa 1m31.832s; 5 Vergne 1m31.839s; 6 Rowland 1m31.850s; 7 Cassidy 1m31.853s; 8 Wehrlein 1m31.900s; 9 Lynn 1m31.952s; 10 Nato 1m31.964s; 11 Rast 1m32.125s; 12 Sims 1m32.146s; 13 Buemi 1m32.209s; 14 Dennis 1m32.247s; 15 Vandoorne 1m32.277s; 16 Bird 1m32.281s; 17 di Grassi 1m32.303s; 18 Mortara 1m32.329s; 19 Lotterer 1m32.339s; 20 Muller 1m32.344s; 21 Blomqvist 1m32.630s; 22 Turvey 1m32.633s; 23 de Vries 1m33.070s; 24 Sette Camara.

CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Frijns 62; 2 de Vries 57; 3 Evans 54; 4 da Costa 52; 5 Bird 49; 6 Vandoorne 48; 7 Vergne 46; 8 Rast 39; 9 Rowland 35; 10 Dennis 33.

NEXT RACE

MEXICO E-PRIX 24 JUNE ISSUE

Will the positive momentum last with a visit to offbeat Puebla?





Cook leads
Cammish, Hill,
Plato and Ingram on
the way to win in
second race

Cook serves up a delicious starter

Forget the big-name moves from the off-season. It was the BTC Racing Honda battler who kicked the campaign off with a double win

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  motorsport
IMAGES



Josh Cook wasn't at the forefront of the British Touring Car Championship gossip pre-season. He's remained at the BTC Racing Honda team to drive its Civic Type R for a third successive campaign, amid all the winter chopping and changing on the driver-and-car line-ups. There was no sign of setting the world on fire in the official test at Silverstone. And the end of BTC's two-year tie-up with Civic builder Team Dynamics coincided with a switch from the potent Neil Brown-built Honda engines to the 'bog-standard' TOCA Swindon unit.

Yet there was the lofty Bath redhead last weekend at Thruxton, bursting out of the blocks with speed when it mattered, and rough-but-the-right-side-of-fair racecraft when required, to brush off the opposition and blitz the first two races. Reigning champion Ash Sutton could have been the talk of the town at the Hampshire speedbowl; his Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50, with a winter of development upon it, now appears to be quick in all conditions, yet bad luck meant he would have to wait until the reversed-grid finale to notch up his deserved win. And Jake Hill was a superstar on his first race weekend with the Ford Focus. He finished third in all three races for the Motorbase-run MB Motorsport team and leads the championship by one point from Cook, and it was an exquisite yet aggressive drive in the finale, on slick tyres in the wet, that deservedly earned him the plaudits.

It was that weather that made Thruxton inconclusive as to the likely pattern of the season ahead, not that its super-fast 2.356 miles of asphalt have ever been a decent barometer. But it's a place where Cook always excels – before the weekend, four of his eight BTCC wins to date had been achieved there. Yet few looked to the Cook/BTC Honda combination as a favourite. "People think not much has changed here, but it has," he mused after his opening-race win. "We're in a good place as a team, and from an engineering perspective. We've got a new structure, and a new engine."

On engineering duties is former single-seater wizard Mick Cook, the technical

brains behind the Super Nova domination of 1990s Formula 3000. If you think he might be related to his driver, you'd be wrong. But they hopefully will be eventually: Mick's daughter is Josh's long-time girlfriend... "He started doing touring cars and said, 'Can I come along?'" recalls Mick. "I said, 'It's got a roof on it. What would I know?'" That was in Josh's Triple Eight MG days in 2016, and they worked together with Ford machinery in 2017 and at the Power Maxed Vauxhall squad in 2018. More recently, Mick ran Tom Chilton at BTC last year, but is now back with his almost-relative, with Josh's former engineer Steve Brady also still involved.

The Cooks called it right in qualifying. Free practice had been wet, and the conditions were initially similar when it counted. But

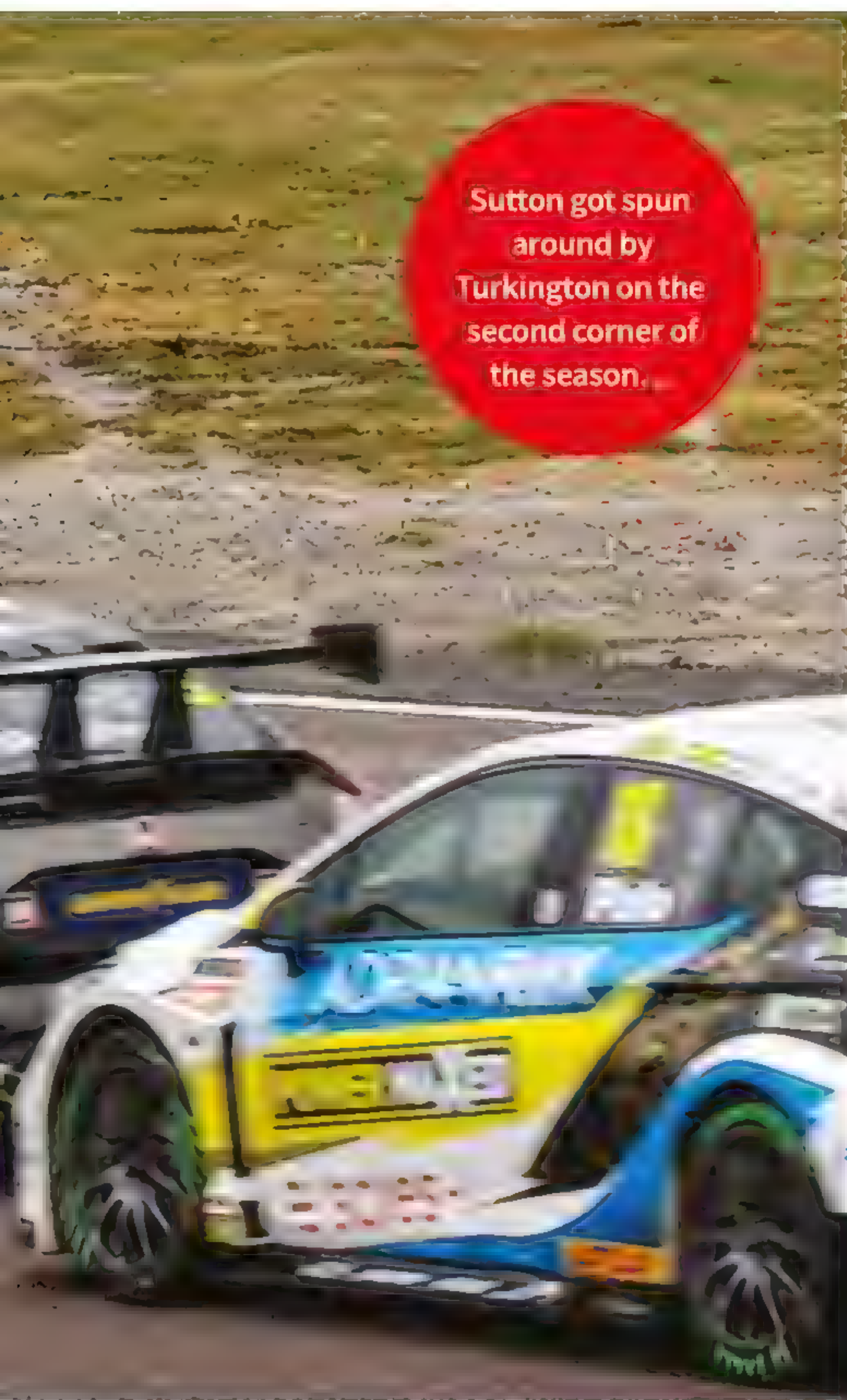
then it dried sufficiently for some to fit slicks: Tom Oliphant was the first, with Hill and Rory Butcher following not long after. Poleman Sutton and front-row partner Cook both got the slicks on with enough time to do seven flying laps, and the Honda finished up just 0.053 seconds adrift of the Infiniti, 3s off a good dry-weather pace. "It took longer than I expected to get some temperature in the tyres," explained Cook.

With Colin Turkington third on the grid in his West Surrey Racing-run BMW 330i M Sport, Cook was always going to struggle at the start against the rear-wheel-drive cars surrounding him. On a dry track, Turkington surged ahead of the Honda, but Cook fought back at the Complex, trying to get around the outside of the BMW. In his bid to defend the inside line and get the power on at the exit, that put Turkington on a collision course with the unfortunate Sutton, whose Infiniti spun to the back of the field. "I didn't even see it coming," said Sutton. "I looked in the mirror, and saw he was two car lengths away, no need to defend. And then I was hit and I was just a passenger."

Turkington had further adventures on that opening lap. Cook, now in front after rubbing shoulders with Turkington at the Complex, got out of shape at the Goodwood right-hander. He moved across to defend from Turkington, and the BMW's lost momentum allowed Tom Ingram a run in the Excel8 Motorsport Hyundai, which speared into second place at Church Corner.



...but the reigning champ bounced back to win the day's final race



Sutton got spun around by Turkington on the second corner of the season.

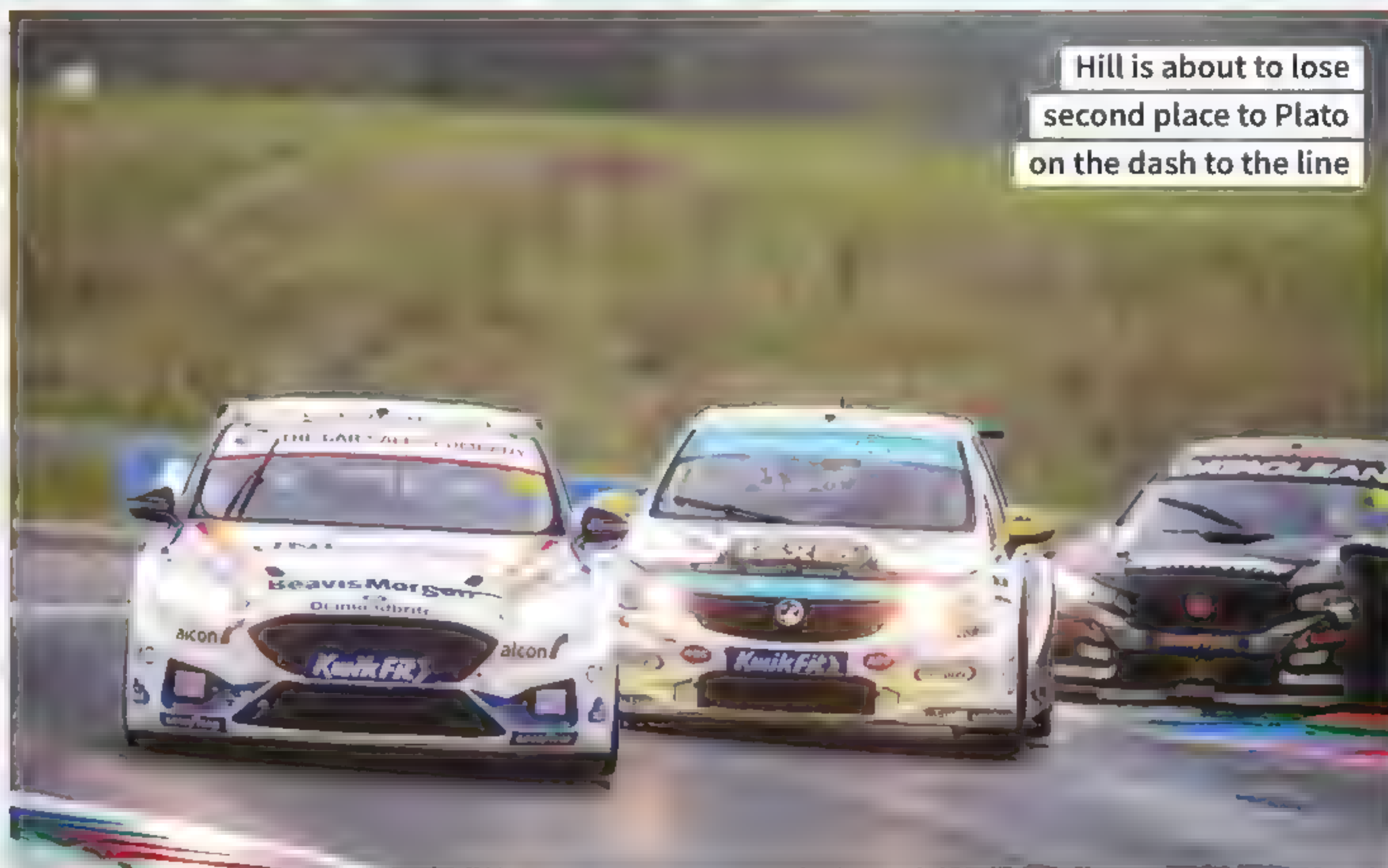
“I saw he was two car lengths away, no need to defend. Then I was hit and was just a passenger”

Turkington ran wide and, his wing-mirror folded in from the Cook contact, drove team-mate Oliphant clean off the track and into a grassy spin as he recovered.

As you'd expect, Turkington was the first to admit that the opening lap wasn't the finest minute and a half of his illustrious touring car career. Clutching a bag of frozen peas, which betrayed the chronic back pain that had hit him on Saturday, he shrugged: “In the end it [the clash with Sutton] was an error of judgement on my part. Josh hung round the outside and I was trying not to let him get past, and we were tracking in with a bit more speed than Ash. By the time I realised, I was into the back of Ash. I've been on the receiving end of that many times, and had it been front-wheel drive he'd have been up and gone.”

Unbeknown to Turkington, he was now relying on a trademark Sutton charge, because post-race the four-time champion would be thumped with a time penalty to place him behind the Infiniti driver. From >>

HILL ON A CREST AT THRUXTON



Hill is about to lose second place to Plato on the dash to the line

Shaun Hollamby was standing alongside Autosport at the platform on the inside of the Thruxton chicane, looking the swish man about town in dapper black coat. Free practice had started, and Jake Hill's Ford Focus was straight into the 1m21s in the wet – that's an insane time, but the Goodyear rain tyres are grippy and so is the Thruxton surface. “I can remember when I was doing those times in the dry in my Golf,” he mused.

Hang on, shouldn't he be in the pitlane? Didn't he buy Motorbase with Sam Osborne's dad Pete? Well, yes, but things changed, and Hollamby, his old Essex-based AmD staff now ensconced across the Medway at Motorbase's Kent premises, left the partnership. But he still keeps an involvement with Hill's career, and he has another string to his bow: presenting the new Pitch BTCC TV show, to be shown on the SportyStuff channel.

Oh yeah, and Motorbase founder David Bartrum was in the pitlane. Wait a minute, wasn't he supposed to be retiring from the BTCC after selling up? “Part of the deal was I was going to come to races anyway, standing around,” said Bartrum. “But now Shaun and Pete have parted ways, and it's

a big train set to play with, and bigger than it ever was [with four cars]. So Pete asked me if I would join him as joint team principal, just to get him up to speed. That means I'm still standing around, but now I'm doing it with a title and a bit of input!”

It turned into a fantastic weekend for the team, with Hill's three podiums propelling him into the championship lead. After the first, the amiable Osborne Sr hoisted his pocket-sized charger clean off the ground as he hugged him; after the third, where Hill worked miracles on slicks in the wet, the team was just incredulous. He so nearly beat Jason Plato to second, but the Vauxhall veteran had the grip to outaccelerate the Ford to the finish line.

When Ash Sutton passed Hill for the lead, he audaciously tried to fight back at Church Corner and the chicane, but the grip just wasn't there.

“I'm absolutely screwed!” beamed the exhausted Hill. “I'm proud of myself, I'm proud of the team. I don't think there's many people who could have driven that quickly in wet conditions on the slicks. The race win was definitely there – it's a shame the rain came back at the end. I loved my battle with Ash, and it was unfortunate that Jason was there at the end.”

Just to add to the bonhomie, Osborne Jr won Jack Sears Trophy honours on the weekend thanks to a ‘class’ win in the finale, after Dan Rowbottom, winner of the first two races, lost a gamble to fit slicks mid-race. The Osbornes are a family who love their racing, and the joy was palpable. So are the Hills, and it seems that, in Jake's case, he's at the crossover between valiant underdog to becoming fully fledged top-liner. Much to the pleasure, too, of that new Pitch BTCC presenter.



Hill collected three of these on the day



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26th at the end of the first lap, Sutton stormed through to 10th, which is therefore the position Turkington inherited when his penalty (17s) was applied, dropping him from fourth on the road.

In the meantime, Ingram was now applying pressure to Cook. This was a great first race in the Hyundai, which had never before come close to a podium in a non-reversed-grid race. Once Cook settled, he was up and away, but Ingram was ecstatic: "It was almost a perfect start. Well, not quite, because we could have won it. But a podium in the first race with the team is fantastic. Of course we're looking at glory and cheap champagne, but also the points that come with it are important." "I didn't want to push too hard out of the blocks, with it being the first time here in the dry this year," pointed out Cook.

With the BTCC's success ballast increased back to pre-2019 levels this year, Cook would now have to lug 75kg around in race two. Remarkably, he set a faster lap time on his way to making it a double victory. This time there was brusque shoulder-rubbing with Ingram at the Complex on the opening lap, but it was Cook's temporary BTC Honda team-mate Dan Cammish (see Pit & Paddock) who ended up chasing him throughout. "We made some changes with the weight and it really helped," said Cook. "We tried it in testing and it worked, but it was good to replicate that. I was happy sitting at those sorts of lap times." Cook had prior experience of running with 75kg at Thruxton after his 2018 win there in the PMR Astra, and Mick Cook added: "We looked back on those races and used that as a basis.



I suppose that's an advantage, having worked with Josh so long. To win that race with ballast is really pleasing. All the testing we did was with weight in the car, although we couldn't do as much as we wanted."

That was the end of Cook's supremacy. He started 11th on the reversed grid and, like Oliphant and Hill ahead of him, opted for slick tyres on the damp track. As Hill proved, it could have worked, especially as Cook set fastest lap of the race, a massive 1.9s quicker than Hill's. But a harsh 30s stop-go penalty was dished out to him for the car still being up on its jacks with three minutes to go before the start of the race.

Now it was Sutton's turn to shine. Once again there'd been a patented burn from the

stern in race two. This race had taken some time to really get going. It was red-flagged initially after Andy Neate, who thought his throttle had stuck, tagged Glynn Geddie at Allard, spinning around the Scot's Team Hard Cupra. Poor Jade Edwards was stuck on the outside and was ushered into the barriers by the unchivalrous chaps alongside her, whereupon Geddie's car rode crazily along the tyrewall, rotated mid-air, bounced back off Edwards's BTC Honda and then landed upside down. At the restart, Rory Butcher, who had won a terrific scrap for fifth with Jason Plato in the opener to get his Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla career off to a sound start, found himself on the outside of a three-wide fight into the >>

PLATO: AGE SHALL NOT WEARY THEM

Jason Plato is back, and he's angry. The veteran two-time champion ploughed straight back into controversy in Saturday's qualifying when he baulked Jake Hill's final flier at the chicane while he was heading for the pits

in his Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra.

What made Plato fume was an official who, apparently in all seriousness, suggested that the bespectacled 53-year-old was perhaps getting a bit old and

maybe his eyesight wasn't as good as it once was.

What followed on Sunday was three very strong races for Plato. From 11th on the grid, he raced to sixth in race one, losing out in a fight with Dan Cammish and Rory Butcher. In race two he improved to fifth after being passed by Dan Rowbottom. And in the finale he pipped Hill for second, just 4.8s behind winner Ash Sutton after starting four places behind him.

The tricky conditions in the final race arguably mitigated what Plato felt was a straightline speed disadvantage, hence his being relatively easy prey to Cammish and Rowbottom in the earlier encounters. "I don't mind being

overtaken into a corner, but I can't stand someone breezing past me on the straights," he remarked.

"We're making progress, we're honing the car, but everyone can see we need more motor. It could be that we've got a draggy car aero-wise, but that doesn't make sense if people in front are cutting a hole in the air for me and I still can't get close. Or we might need improvements on the charge cooling, although we've made really good gains on that in the past 18 months and I doubt there's more to come."

He's fighting on track and off, back on the podium, and he's third in the standings, just eight points off the summit...

Plato's 600th BTCC start came in opener





Noble kink, the right-rear lost grip, and he was spat heavily into the barriers.

The safety car caused by Butcher's shunt enabled Sutton to pit due to an engine glitch he anticipated would cost him "three or four seconds a lap". After a quick fix, he rejoined still on the lead lap, and this time scorched from 24th to ninth in just 10 racing laps. That set him up nicely for the finale, for which he lined up third, on just 15kg of ballast, and behind the WSR BMWs of Stephen Jelley and Oliphant.

With Oliphant on slicks on the damp track, he stood no chance in the early stages, and on the second lap Sutton worked his way past Jelley and into the lead. By the end of lap two, Oliphant was down in 19th place, with fellow slicks runner Hill in 20th. On the following tour, Hill passed Oliphant, and over the next two laps the crossover point arrived when the slicks became quicker. Now came the charge. On the eighth lap of 16, Hill passed six cars to move up to fourth. By the end of the 10th lap, it was Hill leading from Oliphant. And the next two times around, the rain came again and the reverse crossover happened...

With two and a half laps remaining, Sutton was back in front. While Hill's magnificent drive (see panel, p43) was still good enough for third, pipped by Plato's Power Maxed Vauxhall (see panel, p45) on the dash to the line, the BMW usually doesn't cope too well with slicks in the damp and Oliphant faded to fifth. Furthermore, a 5s penalty for an out-of-position start dumped the Cheshire man to seventh. "Even with the penalty I thought I could still win the race," said Oliphant. "I was quicker than Jake, but it wasn't to be. These are historically terrible conditions for us, but we've made some big improvements over the winter."

Turkington too was struggling. After running second to Sutton in the early stages, he faded to seventh on the road: "I was trying to protect the rear tyres but they got too hot, and I spent more time sliding each lap. When the rain came back, they were too far gone to get the grip back." But at least he'd scored three points finishes on a tough weekend physically: "I was in so much pain. I got to see a chiropractor last night, and with a bit of treatment and medication I got it under control."

I could barely do a lap yesterday, so I was pleased with three top-10s."

And apart from Sutton's and Hill's magic drives, there was another from Gordon Shedden. The three-time champion, returning to the seat of a Team Dynamics Honda, had a nightmare start. On the opening lap of race one, he got caught out by Ollie Jackson checking up on the kerb in front of him at Noble, ran wide, and then speared back across the track and got collected heavily by the unfortunate Chris Smiley's Excelr8 Hyundai. Dynamics threw the car together but it was out of sorts for race two. Further attention before the finale meant Shedden missed the window to exit the pits to the grid, so he started from the rear of the field. And then he scythed through to fourth, missing out on a podium by just 0.2s. That matched the best result of impressive team-mate Dan Rowbottom.

"Flash' was the fastest on the track," said Dynamics boss Matt Neal (Shedden's best lap was quickest of those on rain tyres by 0.8s). "It's a case of what might have been, but at least we go to Snetterton [round two] light [on ballast]. Whenever he's won a championship he's had a crap first round!"

So you can't rule out Shedden, or Sutton, or Turkington — as you'd expect. Cook and Hill made the headlines over the weekend, but the pattern of this season is far from set. ❧

Turkington's back:
frozen peas not pictured



P68 SUPPORTS REPORT

See Club Autosport for all the F4, Ginetta, Porsche and Mini action.

RESULTS ROUND 1/10, THRUXTON (GBR), 9 MAY, RACE 1 (19 LAPS – 44.764 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM / CAR	TIME
1	Josh Cook (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	29m33.844s
2	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback	+2.298s
3	Jake Hill (GBR)	MB Motorsport (Motorbase) / Ford Focus	+4.227s
4	Dan Cammish (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+9.323s
5	Rory Butcher (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla	+11.758s
6	Jason Plato (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+12.046s
7	Dan Rowbottom (GBR)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R	+12.607s
8	Adam Morgan (GBR)	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330i M Sport	+19.612s
9	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50	+21.259s
10	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport	+21.825s
11	Aiden Moffat (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50	+22.760s
12	Carl Boardley (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing / Infiniti Q50	+26.391s
13	Jack Goff (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+26.720s
14	Tom Chilton (GBR)	Ciceley Motorsport / BMW 330i M Sport	+27.138s
15	Tom Oliphant (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport	+27.448s
16	Daniel Lloyd (GBR)	Power Maxed Racing / Vauxhall Astra	+27.791s
17	Sam Osborne (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	+29.846s
18	Aron Taylor-Smith (IRL)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+31.038s
19	Ollie Jackson (GBR)	MB Motorsport (Motorbase) / Ford Focus	+33.636s
20	Jade Edwards (GBR)	BTC Racing / Honda Civic Type R	+38.774s
21	Jack Butel (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback	+41.015s
22	Glynn Geddie (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	+41.932s
23	Sam Smelt (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport / Toyota Corolla	+42.886s
24	Andy Neate (GBR)	Motorbase Performance / Ford Focus	+45.545s
25	Rick Parfitt (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback N	+45.928s
26	Nicolas Hamilton (GBR)	Team Hard / Cupra Leon	-2 laps
R	Stephen Jelley (GBR)	West Surrey Racing / BMW 330i M Sport	10 laps-transmission
R	Gordon Shedden (GBR)	Team Dynamics / Honda Civic Type R	0 laps-accident
R	Chris Smiley (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport / Hyundai i30 N Fastback	0 laps-accident

Winner's average speed 90.84mph. **Fastest lap** Cook 1m16.500s, 110.87mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Sutton 1m18.305s; 2 Cook 1m18.358s; 3 Turkington 1m18.667s; 4 Ingram 1m18.718s; 5 Butcher 1m18.835s; 6 Oliphant 1m18.891s; 7 Hill 1m18.909s; 8 Shedden 1m19.115s; 9 Jackson 1m19.946s; 10 Smiley 1m20.045s; 11 Plato 1m20.278s; 12 Cammish 1m20.393s; 13 Boardley 1m20.713s; 14 Morgan 1m20.763s; 15 Goff 1m20.935s; 16 Rowbottom 1m20.982s; 17 Edwards 1m21.274s; 18 Jelley 1m21.476s; 19 Taylor-Smith 1m21.477s; 20 Chilton 1m21.615s; 21 Moffat 1m21.852s; 22 Lloyd 1m22.370s; 23 Osborne 1m22.655s; 24 Neate 1m22.879s; 25 Parfitt 1m23.765s; 26 Smelt 1m23.852s; 27 Geddie 1m24.457s; 28 Butel 1m25.131s; 29 Hamilton 1m25.187s.



Cook was unbeatable in first two races

GRID RACE 2 Decided by result of Race 1.

RACE 2 (15 LAPS – 35.340 MILES)

1 Cook (75kg) 23m06.411s; 2 Cammish (39kg) +0.234s; 3 Hill (57kg) +1.625s; 4 Rowbottom (21kg) +4.655s; 5 Plato (27kg) +4.976s; 6 Ingram (66kg) +6.961s; 7 Turkington (48kg) +7.303s; 8 Moffat +9.291s; 9 Sutton (9kg) +10.055s; 10 Oliphant +11.411s; 11 Jelley +13.259s; 12 Goff +13.759s; 13 Jackson +15.311s; 14 Lloyd +15.826s; 15 Taylor-Smith +16.944s; 16 Osborne +17.540s; 17 Boardley +19.551s; 18 Shedden +19.914s; 19 Butel +26.245s; 20 Smelt +26.623s; 21 Morgan (15kg) +32.085s; 22 Hamilton +35.931s; R Smiley 14 laps-water/oil temps; R Parfitt 8 laps-throttle; R Butcher (33kg) 0 laps-accident; R Chilton 0 laps-fuel pump; R Edwards 0 laps-accident; R Geddie 0 laps-accident; R Neate 0 laps-accident.

Winner's average speed 91.76mph.

Fastest lap Cook 1m16.453s, 110.93mph.

GRID RACE 3 Decided by result of Race 2, with top 11 reversed.

RACE 3 (16 LAPS – 37.696 MILES)

1 Sutton (15kg) 22m47.671s; 2 Plato (39kg) +4.789s; 3 Hill (57kg) +4.859s; 4 Shedden +5.025s; 5 Lloyd +9.927s; 6 Turkington (27kg) +10.105s; 7 Oliphant (9kg) +13.212s; 8 Goff +14.014s; 9 Jackson +16.377s; 10 Jelley +18.713s; 11 Taylor-Smith +21.321s; 12 Osborne +24.962s; 13 Chilton +25.188s; 14 Smelt +25.722s; 15 Smiley +38.847s; 16 Parfitt +40.064s; 17 Hamilton +52.655s; 18 Morgan +55.339s; 19 Butel +1m04.841s; 20 Cook (75kg) -1 lap; 21 Rowbottom (48kg) -1 lap; 22 Ingram (33kg) -1 lap; 23 Cammish (66kg) -1 lap; R Boardley 14 laps-accident; R Butcher 14 laps-accident; R Moffat (21kg) 9 laps-engine; R Edwards 3 laps-electrical; NS Geddie accident; NS Neate accident.

Winner's average speed 99.22mph.

Fastest lap Cook 1m18.594s, 107.91mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Hill 46; 2 Cook 45; 3 Plato 38; 4 Sutton 36; 5 Cammish 30; 6 Ingram 27; 7 Turkington 25; 8 Rowbottom 22; 9 Oliphant 16; 10 Goff 15.

NEXT EVENT

SNETTERTON 17 JUNE ISSUE

It's a five-week break until the trip to Norfolk. Hopefully the crowds will be able to return.



Win and an eighth place earned Hauger points lead

Hauger steals early march in chaotic F3 opener

FIA FORMULA 3
BARCELONA (ESP)
8-9 MAY
ROUND 1/7

FIA Formula 3 has a reputation for being chaotic, and the first weekend of the season certainly didn't disappoint.

The three races featured three different winners – ART Grand Prix's Alexander Smolyar plus Prema Racing pair Olli Caldwell and Dennis Hauger – in the first event run to the new triple-header format including two reversed-grid races.

Hauger snatched a late pole position for the main event on Sunday, which pays much more heavily on points than the other two races, by pipping Trident-run fellow Red Bull protege Jack Doohan by a mere 0.006 seconds.

Hauger had to work for it at the start, emerging from a four-wide moment at Turn 1 in front. Victor Martins emerged

in second from Matteo Nannini and Doohan. On lap nine, Doohan snatched third from the MP Motorsport car of Martins, before passing HWA racer Nannini three tours later.

By this stage Hauger was over 3s ahead, and Doohan had to settle for second. Behind Nannini, Caldwell passed Martins for fourth with four laps remaining. On the penultimate lap, Clement Novalak took sixth from Logan Sargeant, before Frederik Vesti and Caio Collet also passed the American. Roman Stanek completed the top 10.

Smolyar claimed his maiden F3 win in the first race of the weekend, for which the grid was the top 12 reversed from qualifying. Carlin's rookie Red Bull Junior Jonny Edgar started from pole, but Smolyar took the lead from him on the fourth lap of 22, with the help of DRS at Turn 1. Smolyar had broken the DRS train by lap eight, giving him more than 1.5s on Edgar, which he extended to more than 2s by the 12th lap.

Trident racer Novalak rose from sixth on

the grid to second, and was starting to threaten Smolyar when the safety car appeared for the run to the finish. MP Motorsport rookie Collet took third on his debut. Sargeant, whose deal to race for Charouz Racing System was only completed earlier in the week, finished fourth as Edgar slipped to fifth.

Caldwell scored his first F3 win in the afternoon. With the top 12 in race one reversed on the grid for the sequel, the Briton's sixth place meant he started seventh. But he moved into contention by avoiding incidents involving front-row starters David Schumacher and Enzo Fittipaldi, followed by another tangle between Nannini and Hauger.

The first safety car came on the opening lap after contact at Turn 2 between Novalak and Smolyar. That gave a right-rear puncture to Smolyar, who veered right and collected Sargeant on his way into the gravel.

Fittipaldi held the lead until the 12th lap when Schumacher took him by surprise with a late braking move at Turn 1. Three laps later, the pair collided when Fittipaldi attempted to pass around the outside of Turn 1 before tagging the German, who bounced over the kerb and across the gravel into the barrier.

This gave Nannini the lead, with Hauger second and Caldwell third as Fittipaldi ground to a halt. Nannini tried to fend off Hauger, only for the Norwegian to get sideways over the Turn 1 kerb and punt Nannini into a spin. Both cars lost their front wings in the tangle and plummeted down the order, allowing Caldwell to win from Martins and Vesti.

MEGAN WHITE



Smolyar notched first bragging rights of the new FIA F3 season

WRT Audi duo write sprint success story

GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE
SPRINT CUP

MAGNY-COURS (FRA)

8-9 MAY

ROUND 1/5

Behind the masks, the emotion was clear for WRT Audi duo Charles Weerts and Dries Vanthoor. They stood in parc ferme under the Magny-Cours floodlights, job done in the opening GT World Challenge Europe Sprint Cup race of the season. Victory in the race on Saturday, followed by a second place to Toksport Mercedes pairing Maro Engel and Luca Stolz on Sunday, made sure that the Belgian line-up kicked off their title defence in fine fashion.

Weerts and Vanthoor topped Friday's practice before repeating the feat in the pre-qualifying session. Come qualifying proper, the #32 Audi R8 seemed glued to the top of the leaderboard in Weerts's hands. The closest challengers over one lap came in the form of the Emil Frey Lamborghinis, with Ricardo Feller just 0.1s away from pole in the car he would share with Albert Costa. Feller was a late addition to the Huracan GT3 Evo line-up after Norbert Siedler was ruled out following a crash in pre-qualifying. Arthur Rougier took Feller's place in the other machine alongside Alex Fontana and qualified a superb third.

The opening salvo of the race was just as close, with Weerts and Feller escaping into the darkness and going toe to toe until the race was neutralised after Frank Bird's sister WRT Audi became acquainted with the gravel trap at Grande Courbe. This delayed the pit window, which was only two minutes away at the time of Bird's incident. After this, Vanthoor remained firmly in control of the one-hour race, finishing 6.4s clear of Costa, with Fontana bringing the sister Lambo home third and securing a second consecutive Silver Cup win of 2021.



Conspicuous by its absence in the top 10 on Saturday night was the Toksport Mercedes of Stolz and Engel, who retired in the closing minutes when the left-rear wheel came off exiting Chateau d'Eau.

Engel made amends on Sunday morning in second qualifying to take pole, and proved his Mercedes was the car to beat during the race too, despite Engel describing his stint as "tougher than I would have liked" amid slight balance issues with his AMG GT3.

The main threat before the pitstop window came from the Jota McLaren of Ben Barnicoat, promoted to second following a right-rear puncture for Costa's Lambo, but a fumbled belt procedure during the driver change dropped team-mate Oliver Wilkinson to fourth. That allowed Weerts into third behind Timur Boguslavskiy, who profited from a strong opening stint by Raffaele Marciello and slick pit work from the AKKA ASP Mercedes team.

Although the Toksport Merc was largely in control, Stolz had to manage two late safety car restarts, the first of which was initiated by Benjamin Goethe's Audi crashing at 180, while contact between Tuomas Tujula's Aston and the Mercedes of Petru Umbrurescu caused the second.

But manage it Stolz did, and he took the flag 3s clear of Weerts, who barged past Boguslavskiy following an overly defensive move by the Russian at the Adelaide hairpin on the final lap.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

WEEKEND WINNERS

FIA FORMULA 3

BARCELONA (ESP)

Race 1 Alexander Smolyar

ART Grand Prix

Race 2 Olli Caldwell (below)

Prema Racing

Race 3 Dennis Hauger

Prema Racing

GT WORLD CHALLENGE

EUROPE SPRINT CUP

MAGNY-COURS (FRA)

Race 1 Dries Vanthoor/Charles Weerts

Team WRT (Audi R8 LMS GT3)

Race 2 Maro Engel/Luca Stolz

Toksport (Mercedes-AMG GT3)



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Triple threat Truex keeps Larson at bay

NASCAR CUP
DARLINGTON (USA)
9 MAY
ROUND 12/36

This NASCAR Cup season has so far been marked by numerous different winners, but standing out above the rest is Martin Truex Jr. The only repeat victor from the first 12 encounters, he collected his third triumph of the campaign at the wheel of his Toyota Camry in Darlington last Sunday.

The Joe Gibbs Racing driver dominated events as he won both stages and led for 248 of the 293 laps to bring home the spoils ahead of Kyle Larson by almost 2.6 seconds. The only real challenge to fourth-starting Truex arrived in the last stage – which ended with a 104-lap run to the finish – after the final round of green-flag pitstops.

Chevrolet Camaro racer Larson came out of the stops with a deficit to Truex of around 1.5s and in the final 20 laps he was able to close to under a 1s on several occasions. Hendrick Motorsports driver Larson, though, could never get close enough to attempt a pass for the lead.

“We just had a good balance,” said Truex. “The car would do what I wanted it to do.

Truex bagged his third win of the season to sit second in the table



I just had to manage those long runs. The most important part is we are winning with the low downforce package, which most of the playoff races we run are. [A first win in March at] Phoenix was a really, really big confidence booster for us. I feel like we've carried it since there.

We just have to keep this thing going.”

However, a fifth place for Denny Hamlin proved sufficient for the JGR charger to keep his team-mate off the top of the drivers' standings, with Kyle Busch finishing the race in third ahead of William Byron.

JIM UTTER

Saucy adds more spice to his Regional season

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN
BARCELONA (ESP)
8-9 MAY
ROUND 2/10

Gregoire Saucy's victory in the opening round at Imola had been his first in cars, and he wasted little time adding two more successes to his tally as the

Formula Regional European by Alpine brigade supported the Spanish Grand Prix.

The Swiss claimed pole position for both races, and at the start he tucked in to take the advantage from ART Grand Prix team-mate and fellow front-row qualifier Gabriele Mini away from the start. Mari Boya, who started from third, was beaten away by Paul Aron and Alex Quinn.

While Saucy was little troubled by Mini in a race that ran for much of its time behind the safety car, Prema Powerteam-run Mercedes F1 Junior Aron had to fend off Arden International-run Cornishman Quinn. Boya was fifth in his Van Amersfoort Racing car when the race was neutralised for the run to the finish.

Quinn qualified second for race two and got the inside line into Turn 1, but the superb Saucy clung on around the outside and kept in front. Saucy eventually pulled clear, while Quinn took a strong second position.

Isack Hadjar provided the excitement behind the leading duo. First the Frenchman had two wheels on the grass as he passed Mini on the run to Turn 1, before catching Aron. The Estonian slid wide at the fiddly chicane, allowing Hadjar's R-ace GP car a run. Aron moved aggressively to block, but got his just deserts when he made a proper pig's ear of the first two turns, allowing Hadjar through to finish third.

Saucy leads Quinn at start of race two





Heimgartner leads
Mostert for opening
race success

Mustangs drive Ford round The Bend to end victory drought

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
THE BEND (AUS)
8-9 MAY
ROUND 4/12

Ford's 220-day winless streak in Australian Supercars was snapped by three different Mustang winners from the three sprint races at The Bend last weekend.

The Saturday belonged to Kelly Grove Racing's Andre Heimgartner, the 25-year-old Kiwi taking a first career victory in dominant fashion. He got the day off to a perfect start with pole position in wet conditions thanks to a clever call to run the same tyre set through all three parts of qualifying rather than constantly trying to warm up fresh rubber. He was then shuffled back to third at the start after making a sluggish getaway, only for Chaz Mostert and Anton De Pasquale to run wide on consecutive corners on the first lap in the tricky damp conditions.

Once back in front there was no stopping

Heimgartner in terms of pace, his lead a handy seven seconds when he pitted for slick tyres on lap seven. However, the team almost threw the win away during the stop when he was released into the side of Jamie Whincup in the lane, which drew a five-second penalty. Heimgartner had the speed to clear the reprimand, though, charging to a 9s win over Mostert and De Pasquale.

It was dry running all day on Sunday, De Pasquale making a perfect start when he took his first two career poles from the back-to-back qualifying sessions in the morning. He then converted the first of those poles for his first win in Dick Johnson Racing colours in race two, leading a DJR 1-2 in what was Ford's 400th Australian Touring Car Championship/Supercars victory.

That race featured a nasty opening-lap crash for title contenders and old rivals Mostert and Cam Waters. Looking to avoid Tim Slade on the outside of Turn 6, Mostert inadvertently crunched the right-rear of Waters' car as the trio went three-wide. The damage was bad enough to take them both out of the race.

De Pasquale then looked set to double up on wins in the final race of the weekend, only for an engine issue to take him out of the lead on lap three. That left Waters and his hastily repaired Mustang out front, the Tickford driver leading Whincup across the first stint. But as the race wore on it was Shane van Gisbergen that emerged as Waters' biggest threat, the Kiwi running a long first stint before coming home strong with better tyre condition. He couldn't quite find a way through, though, Waters holding on by just over half a second.



Ford fires back: Waters
leads van Gisbergen
for finale success

WEEKEND WINNERS

NASCAR CUP

DARLINGTON (USA)

Martin Truex Jr
Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Camry)

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES

DARLINGTON (USA)

Justin Allgaier
JR Motorsports (Chevrolet Camaro)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

DARLINGTON (USA)

Sheldon Creed
GMS Racing (Chevrolet Silverado)

FORMULA REGIONAL EUROPEAN

BARCELONA (ESP)

Races 1 & 2 Gregoire Saucy
ART Grand Prix

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS

THE BEND (AUS)

Race 1 Andre Heimgartner
Kelly Grove Racing (Ford Mustang)
Race 2 Anton De Pasquale
Dick Johnson Racing (Ford Mustang)
Race 3 Cameron Waters
Tickford Racing (Ford Mustang)



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

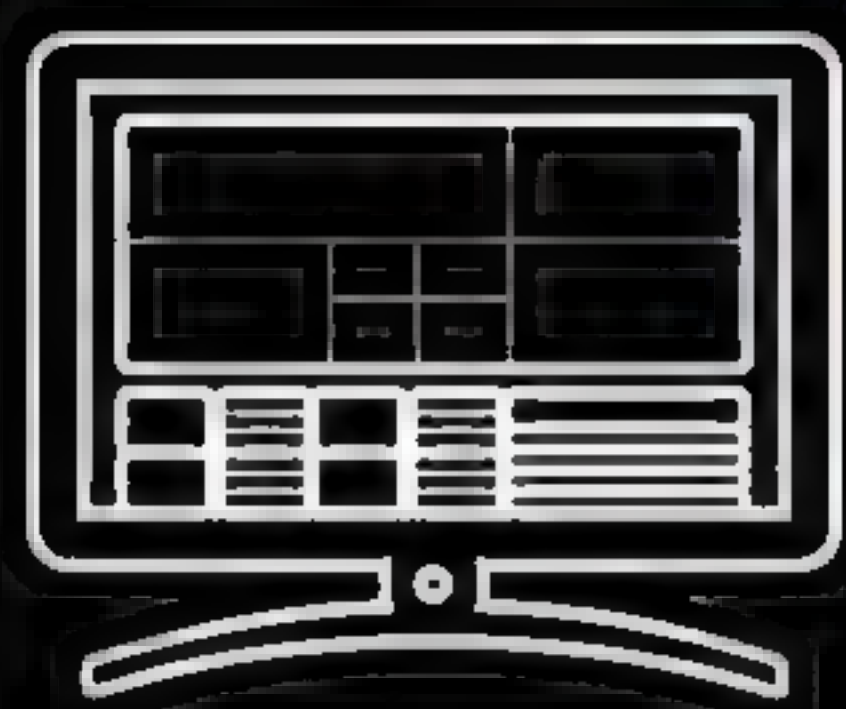
While van Gisbergen didn't add to his 2021 tally of wins, he did leave South Australia with an improved points lead. With a seventh, third and second, he was the unofficial round winner, the gap to Whincup now 190 points. He said: "We struggled for pace all weekend, but [we were] consistent and stayed out of trouble."

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

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Pit talk from the HRDC



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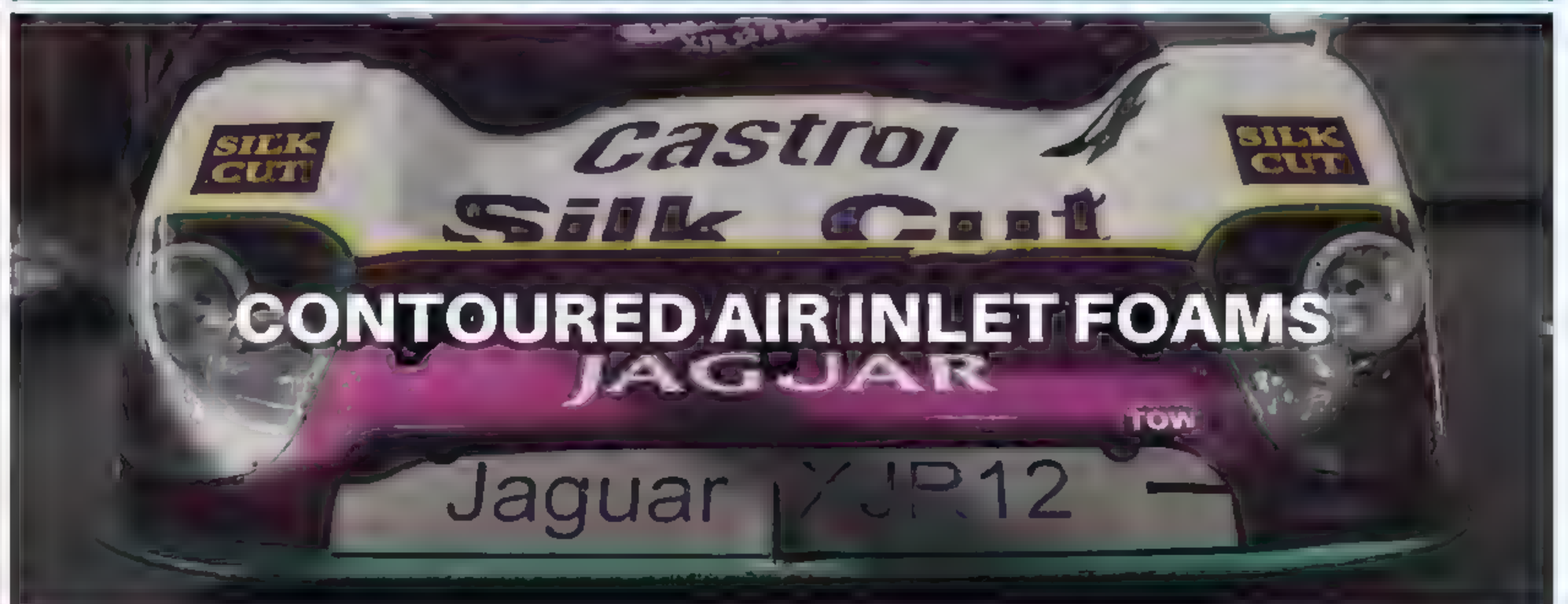
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In this position you will be identifying the latest capabilities that could influence strategies or raise goal expectations whilst working as an effective team player in QA to ensure the team is operating cohesively. The person joining in this role will be working with a number of departments within the team such as Design, Production and Manufacturing Engineering to confirm design specification and ensure new parts have previous quality issues raised and understood to enable improved part accuracy and consistency.

To be successful in this role, you will need in-depth knowledge of GD&T and how this is incorporated into QA processes coupled with excellent knowledge of APQP and PPAP, and NPI. You will need to have experience with analysis data from Gauge R&R to understand measurement accuracy whilst supporting all QA areas with the implementation of Measurement Systems Analysis. As with all of our roles, we will be looking for a candidate who has relevant experience in a similar role & is used to working in a fast-paced environment.

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Previous experience as an F1 Aerodynamic Performance Engineer is preferable. The ideal candidate would be familiar with data analysis techniques and have also had some experience with trackside aerodynamics. The position will involve the use of MATLAB and Atlas and therefore experience with these packages would be advantageous but not essential.

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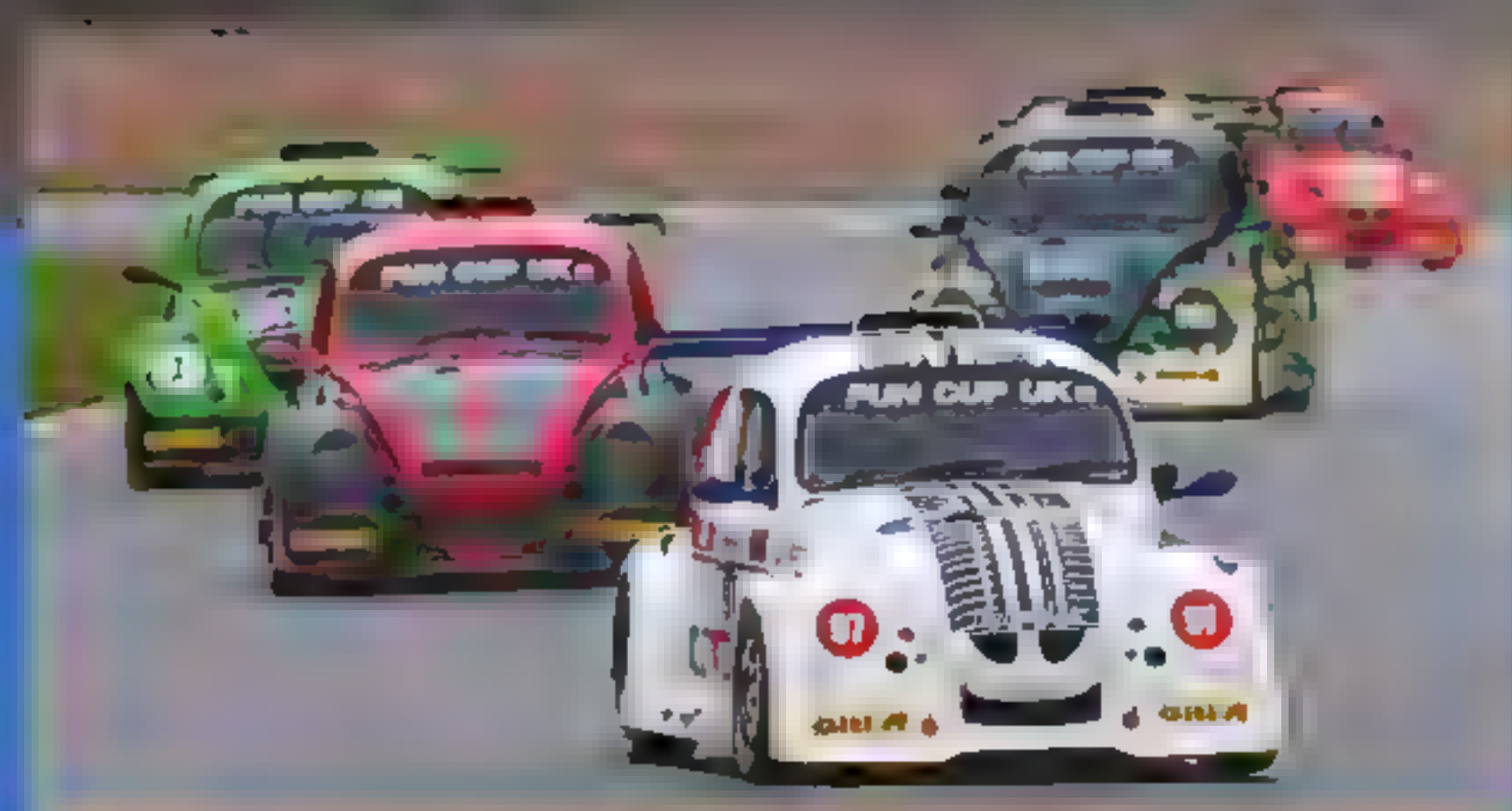
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McGuinness, Peat and Hadley
took 12th spot at the flag



TT LEGEND MCGUINNESS MAKES CAR RACING DEBUT IN FUN CUP

FUN CUP

Twenty-three-time Isle of Man TT winner John McGuinness made his debut racing cars in the Fun Cup at Donington Park last weekend alongside downhill mountain bike world cup winner Steve Peat.

McGuinness recently passed his ARDS test at Mallory Park and took the opportunity to compete while all motorcycle road racing remains suspended. He was introduced to the Fun Cup by multiple truck racing champion and former British Touring Car Championship driver Stuart Oliver.

"I went up to see Stuart, to have

a look at his trucks, and we were chatting away about this Fun Cup," said McGuinness. "I looked at the dates and this worked. I thought with what's going on, I'd just get one in and then at least we can see how I like it.

"You look at a Fun Cup car and you think, 'They look a bit odd, don't they?' You get in it and it feels right. The shift, the brake... down Craner Curves and into the Old Hairpin and McLeans, it's happening — you've got to hold onto it. I went out on the track and people were passing me and I was stressing a bit. But once I settled down I just thought, 'I'm going to watch what he does.'"

In wet conditions, McGuinness and Peat finished 12th out of 25 in the GT Radial car they shared with Ellis Hadley.

"I really did enjoy it," said McGuinness. "I'm just like a fish out of water though. I'm trying my best and people are passing me and they're sideways and they're on the kerbs.

"It's a lot, lot harder than I thought it was going to be and my respect for all the drivers in this Fun Cup has just gone rocketing up. On two wheels, you've only got such a small contact patch — we're just always trying to keep grip, no sliding, so I'm maybe being a bit conservative."

After sampling rallycross at Lydden Hill in the RX150 category and Ollie O'Donovan's Ford Focus Supercar last year, McGuinness has not ruled out further circuit racing appearances on four wheels in the future.

"I still love my bikes," he said. "I've got a little bit of unfinished business. My next TT start will be my 100th so there's a few little areas I want to tidy up there, and then, yeah, maybe... I don't think my wallet's big enough for this car racing!"

MARK PAULSON

P72 DONINGTON PARK REPORT

McGuinness has been
a dominant force on
two wheels for years



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Investigation launched after nasty pitlane collision

Most of the Britcar field stopped at the same time under a safety car, which caused problems in the pits

BRITCAR

Britcar has launched an investigation into a pitlane incident that occurred during last weekend's Snetterton round, and intends to announce new safety changes in the coming days.

The accident took place during the second Britcar Endurance race on Saturday, when an early safety car meant most of the field entered the pits at the same time.

Jonathan Beeson's VW Golf was released by his Sheard Autosport team into the fast lane but, moments later, was clipped on the rear by Nathan Wells's DigiPlat Racing-run BMW M3, which had also been released.

The contact sent Beeson sideways and back towards the pit boxes before slamming

into the side of the stationary Praga R1 of Jack Fabby, which had just been vacated by Charlie Martin.

No one was injured in the incident, which left Beeson "furious", but Britcar Championship owner Claire Hedley has launched an inquiry and is weighing up possible solutions to ensure that the pitlane remains as safe as possible for drivers, teams and officials.

"A thorough investigation was under way an hour after the race with the stewards and BARC and an announcement will be made in the next few days," she said. "There's lots of different things we can do moving forward [for safety] and everything is going to be looked at.

"Safety is of primary importance in

Britcar and for BARC. I'm talking to all the people that have vast experience, people who have worked in British GT, to see what the pros and cons are for everything."

Jamie Stanley, who won the race, was waiting to be released after taking over from John Seale when he saw the incident. "It happened just in front of me," said the Lamborghini driver. "It was lucky no-one was hurt and reminds everybody of the need to be diligent in the pitlane."

For Sunday's Britcar Trophy races, two pitlane windows were instigated by the race organisers in response to the accident, with Class 1, 3 and Clios separated from the Class 2 cars. The windows were swapped for race two, with Class 2 stopping first.

LEWIS BEALES & STEFAN MACKLEY

GT5 champion Malin moves into Porsches

PORSCHE CARRERA CUP

Ginetta GT5 Challenge champion Josh Malin will graduate to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB this season.

Malin prevailed in an incredibly tight title battle with James Taylor in the GT5 series last year, and will continue to drive for Richardson Racing as he steps up to Porsche

machinery, partnering race winner Will Martin.

Malin had originally expected to continue in Ginetta competition this year, but said the chance to race in the Carrera Cup was "too good to turn down".

"It's been a boyhood dream to drive a Carrera Cup car," he said. "I've always been really into Porsche as a brand and I've driven

them on the simulator plenty of times, so it's a privilege to do it for real."

Malin says it will be "a massive step up from the little GT5 from last year", and will be heading into the season with limited testing under his belt, but is targeting rookie class glory. "I just want to do my best," he added.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



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Pearson eyes racing return as cancer treatment continues

BRITISH F4

Former Ginetta Junior driver Joel Pearson is making good progress as he continues to receive treatment for cancer and has been able to get back to driving on a simulator.

Pearson should have made his British Formula 4 debut at Thruxton last weekend with the Argenti Motorsport squad before he was diagnosed with bone cancer over the winter and had to put his racing plans on hold.

"My tumour has shrunk down a lot and it's going really well," said Pearson. "I should finish my treatment in July and I'm feeling a lot better now."

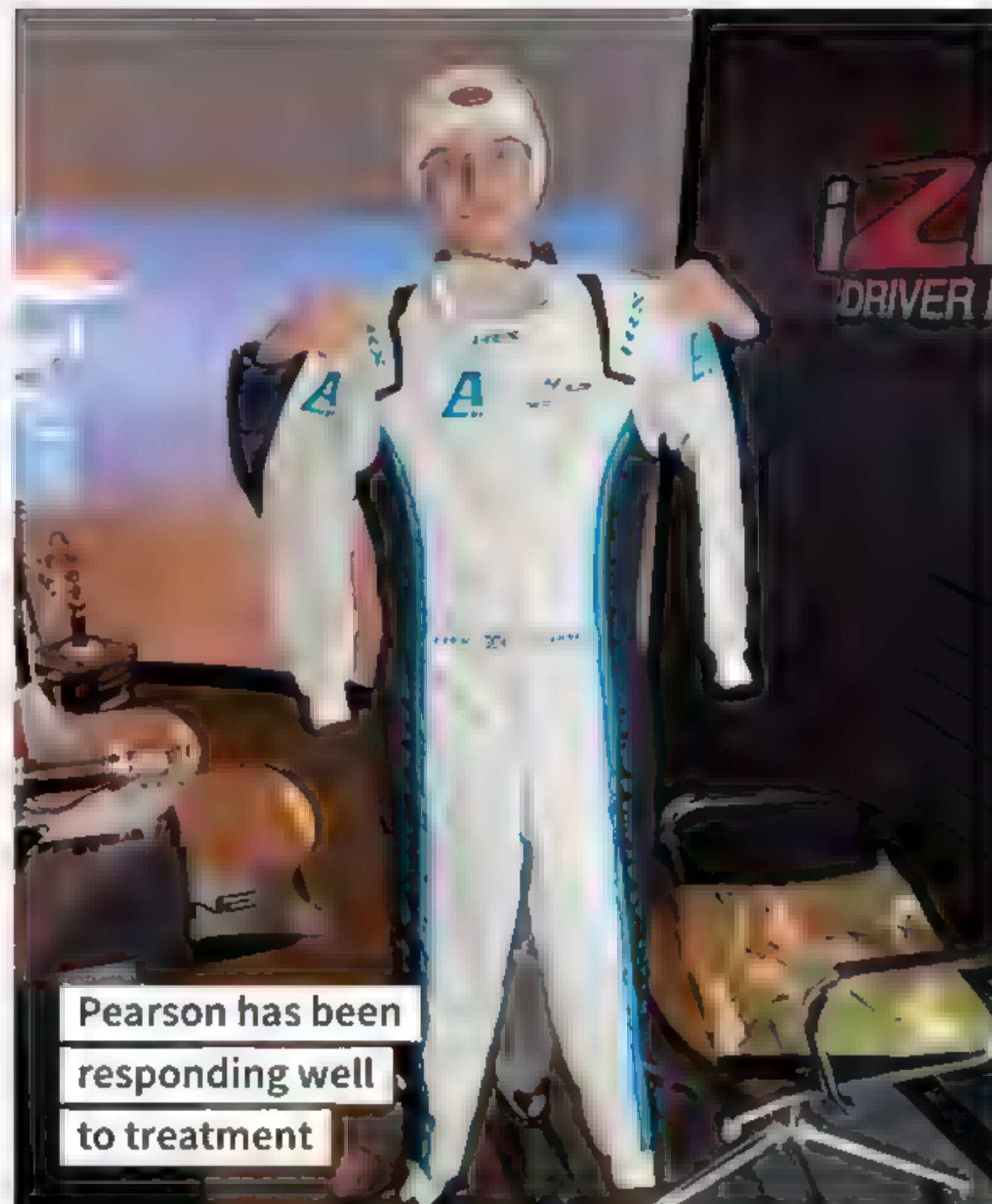
Pearson expressed his thanks to the staff at the iZone facility at Silverstone for enabling him to spend time on the simulator there, adding: "As soon as I sat in the car, it felt completely normal."

If his treatment continues to be successful, Pearson will evaluate later this year whether he will try to make a racing comeback at the end of this season or put all of his efforts into 2022.

He has been raising money for the Teenage Cancer Trust since his diagnosis, and a JustGiving page has been set up, with all the money collected going to the charity.

Argenti took a podium last weekend at Thruxton courtesy of Matias Zagazeta.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Pearson has been responding well to treatment



iZone gave Pearson the chance to go on simulator

IN THE HEADLINES

NO ELITE MINI CHALLENGE

Elite Motorsport will not field any cars in the Mini Challenge this year, following its move into BRDC British F3. The Ginetta powerhouse squad joined the Mini series last year, winning races with Max Bird and Max Coates. "The reality is we didn't want to split ourselves too thin," said team boss Eddie Ives. "We knew moving into F3 would take quite a bit of time, effort and resources. It's a shame because, after we decided not to do it, we had phone calls from people asking to do Minis."

NEW BRDC RISING STARS

A further six drivers have been selected to join the British Racing Drivers' Club's Rising Stars programme. Among the latest intake are British Formula 4 champion Luke Browning, FIA F2 winner Liam Lawson, British GT4 title contender Patrick Kibble, Ginetta GT4 Supercup runner-up Gus Burton, British GT race victor James Baldwin and GT Cup ace Sam Neary.

MILESTONE FOR MERCEDES

Mercedes-AMG GT3 father-and-son duo Richard and Sam Neary's GT Cup victory at Brands Hatch earlier this month had added significance, as it marked the 500th win for Mercedes' Customer Racing Programme since it was introduced in 2010. Out of that 500, which includes class and overall wins, Richard has scored the second most wins with 20. Only factory driver Maximilian Buhk has more.

MORLEY BACK AND ON TOP

After missing the opening rounds of the British Superkart Racing Club Super Series due to a leg injury, Division 1 Superkart driver Liam Morley (below) took three wins from three starts at Snetterton last weekend. He was made to work hard in the final outing by close rivals Lee Harpham and Sam Moss. In the F250 National category, Lee Plain finally bagged two class wins, the second victory ahead of his brother Luke.



Steller's GT4 Audi makes comeback

BRITISH GT

Steller Performance will return to the GT4 ranks of the British GT Championship this year with an Audi R8 LMS entered in the Silver class for team regulars Sennan Fielding and Richard Williams.

The Gary Blackham-run team won twice with the car in its maiden season in 2019, including the final race of the year at Donington Park after the entry was switched from Pro-Am to Silver and had to serve a longer mandatory pitstop.

Steller entered selected

British GT rounds last season with a GT3 Audi, with Fielding and Williams scoring a best result of sixth at Brands Hatch, but the GT4 machine hasn't raced since 2019. Williams tested the car recently at Silverstone "to reacquaint myself with the controls" and told Autosport that he was eager to pick up where he left off.

"The GT4 Audi is such a brilliant package that we were able to extract some good performance from in 2019 and to win the final round of the championship," said Williams. "Last year with the GT3 car

arriving was amazing, and now we've done a full circle back to the GT4 car with Sennan and I, which is very exciting."

Williams added that the team has had time to "iron out all those issues" that come with running in a new car. "That was a brand-new package that we all had to learn about," he said. "But they were only small issues, they weren't anything fundamental, just little things that cost us. We're looking forward to getting it back out there again to try and get some decent results."

JAMES NEWBOLD

CSCC attracts record entry for Donington

CLASSIC SPORTS CAR CLUB

The Classic Sports Car Club has broken its previous record for the number of entries for a meeting after a surge of interest in its event at Donington Park later this month.

The club's fixture at the Leicestershire circuit last season was also popular, setting the benchmark at 492 entries, although more than this were received prior to drivers dropping out amid growing reserve lists.

That 2020 figure has now been surpassed for the 29-30 May meeting this year and entries being processed as Autosport went to press would take the number above 500. With still over two weeks to go before the meeting, more entries could arrive, but club director David Smitheram also cautioned that those on reserve lists may withdraw.

"Unfortunately, quite a lot of those can't race — we've got eight out of the 12 races sold out with reserves," he said. "We're particularly pleased with the Slicks Series [new in 2020], we've got 26 entries for that."

The club's other newest category,



Turbo Tin Tops, has attracted its highest entry yet with 34 cars. "Typically, it takes some time — three or four years — before entries for our new series pick up and that's exactly what's happened here," said Smitheram. "We seem to have reached that critical mass."

Smitheram believes there are a number of reasons why the club's Donington meetings are proving particularly popular, but says it is difficult to attribute any one key factor.

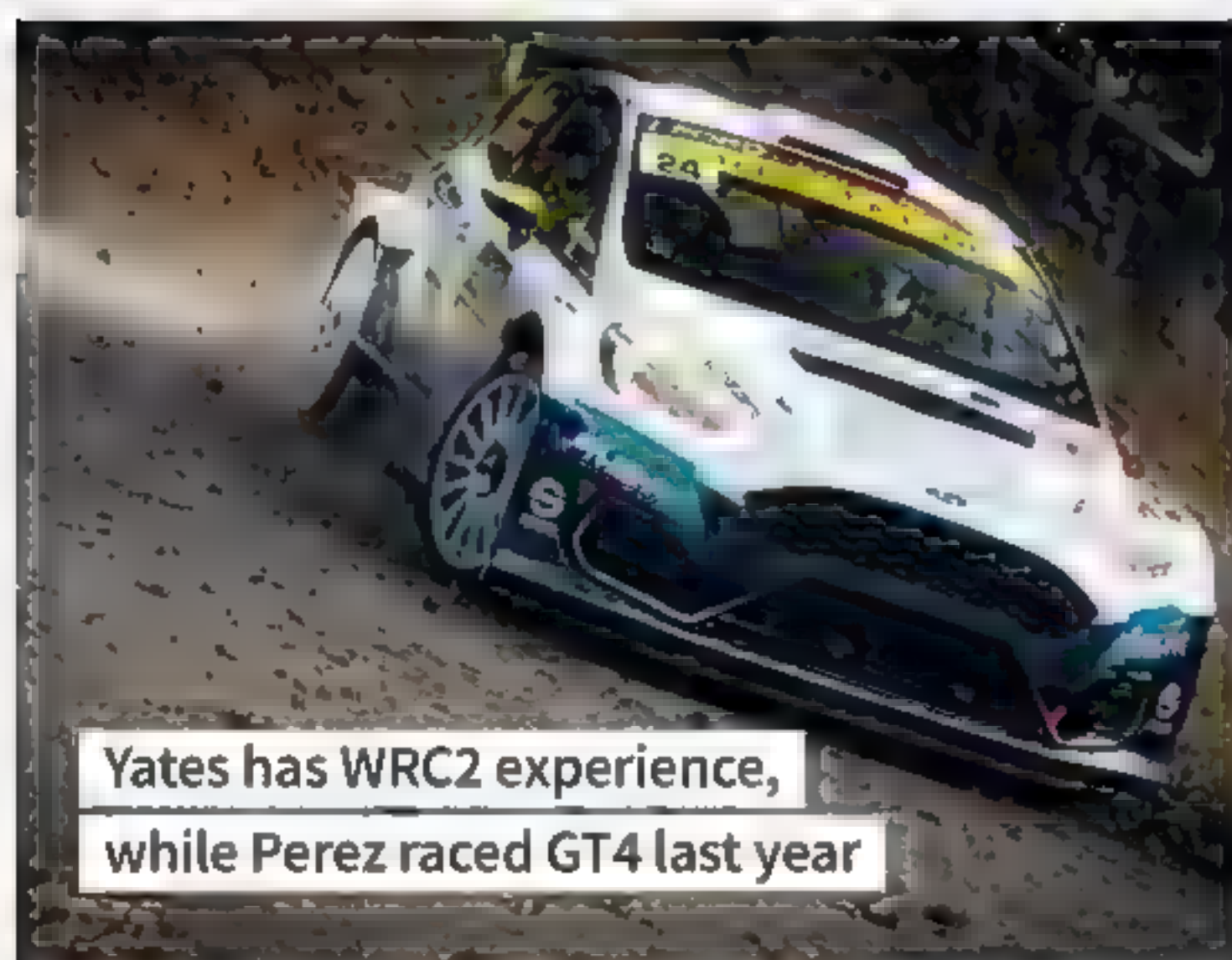
"People's favourites change over the years," he said. "For a few years, everyone

wanted to race at Oulton Park, then it was Silverstone. It helps that MSV has taken Donington on — the facilities have been improved. It's a decent challenge but it's wide and you can overtake and its location is easy to get to."

Smitheram added that attracting such large entries does create challenges. One of the club's regular race officials will instead be deployed to the assembly area to assist marshals, particularly as a number of drivers contest back-to-back races.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Perez and Yates to join BRC field in Fiestas



RALLYING

Former Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Seb Perez will compete in the British Rally Championship this year, driving a Ford Fiesta Rally2 machine.

Perez had intended to continue circuit racing in 2021 but COVID-related

travel restrictions forced the 21-year-old into having a rethink.

"With the fact that my European race aspirations for this season did not quite go to plan, we had to look elsewhere," said Perez, who drove an Aston Martin in the GT4 European Series last year.

"I'm feeling optimistic about the season ahead."

Another Fiesta Rally2 driver will be Rhys Yates — an English title winner in 2015 who went on to finish fourth in the British standings in 2017 and 2018, before competing in the WRC2 category.

JASON CRAIG

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Older F3 cars already have a home with Monoposto club



Monoposto Racing Club new promoter of revamped F3 Cup

F3 CUP

The Monoposto Racing Club has taken over the promotion and running of the F3 Cup ahead of the championship's opening round this weekend at Silverstone.

The category had previously been run by MotorSport Vision Racing but last year grid numbers were very low, with entries failing to reach double figures at any of its four race meetings.

The Monoposto Racing Club, which has successfully run the Monoposto Championship and attracted nearly 40 cars for its Brands Hatch meeting last weekend, will now take the reins.

"There are people who still have the cars and there's a desire to run the championship and I think MSVR didn't

want it to die either," said Monoposto Racing Club coordinator Rachel Lovett. "People know we're taking it over and they are going out and buying cars."

As well as new promoters, there will also be a new class system for 2021 in an attempt to raise grid numbers. The Euro F3 class will be open to cars complying with 2018-19 Euroformula regulations, while the F3 Cup class will be for cars built between 2008 and 2016. There will also be an invitational class for machines such as those used in BRDC British F3 and Formula Renault.

Other plans are being discussed to livestream some of the 2021 races, which will still take place at MSVR fixtures this season.

STEFAN MACKLEY

GRANT TO MAKE CAR RACING DEBUT IN SINGLE-SEATERS

SCOTTISH FF1600

Former karter Lucy Grant will make her car racing debut in Scottish Formula Ford 1600 this year, joining the returning Logan Hannah at Graham Brunton Racing.

Perthshire-based Grant had been set to compete in the Mini Cooper Cup last season but elected to focus efforts on 2021 and has now made the switch to single-seaters.

"It still feels weird to say, 'I'm racing cars this year,'" Grant said. "Especially running with GBR, who I've known for years as a fantastic team of people, I couldn't be more supported and in better hands. The nerves will [arrive] closer to race day, but for now I'm struggling to contain my excitement!"

Team owner Graham Brunton said that he was sure that Grant's prowess in karting would make the transition to single-seaters easier than the Scottish Motor Racing Club's other championships.

Grant and Hannah will contest the full Scottish FF1600 season, with selected National rounds on the cards at Silverstone and Brands Hatch in preparation for the Formula Ford Festival and Walter Hayes Trophy events.

STEPHEN BRUNSDON

F3 racer Williams plans full National FF1600 bid

FF1600

BRDC British Formula 3 driver Carter Williams will focus on Formula Ford 1600 this year, beginning with the National Championship round at Donington Park last weekend.

Californian Williams started his European career in an FF1600 Ray with Don Hardman Racing in 2018, before graduating to British Formula 4, where he won

three races in 2019. Alongside coaching in F4 and targeting F3 outings later in the year, he will now contest the full National FF1600 season with Oldfield Motorsport.

"Maybe we can do the Festival and the Hayes, but for now it's just the National Championship, trying to make a run at it," said Williams, who had a best result of sixth at Donington after contact pitched him into the Redgate gravel in the second

race. "I was out of it for six months, and haven't driven the Van Diemen [before]."

The National Championship grid slumped to 13 cars at Donington. Travel restrictions prevented Low Dempsey Racing's Andre Lafond making his debut. Team Dolan's Morgan Quinn was similarly affected, while team-mate Ben Cochran was sidelined by a broken wrist.

MARK PAULSON



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Talent shows to club racing

Former TV singers Anthony Sahota and Sam Callahan have teamed up in an admirable bid to encourage more people to get involved in national motorsport

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Club motorsport and TV talent show contestants do not seem an obvious combination. But former *Let It Shine* finalist Anthony Sahota and *X Factor* contender Sam Callahan are not only both due to be competing in national racing this year but are also encouraging more to do the same after forming their own business.

The singing duo's interest in motorsport long pre-dates their TV fame. Sahota competed in kart races at Thruxton as a teenager and targeted a move into the junior T Cars series before getting his pilot's licence and studying mechanical engineering. Callahan was inspired by his father Mark, a long-time club driver, and Sam himself has been racing in Bernie's V8s alongside his dad and in the Campaign Against Living Miserably All Porsche Trophy in recent seasons. A chance online conversation between the pair led to them becoming firm friends and setting up The Drivers Side, through which they aim to shine the spotlight on their own racing and encourage others to get involved in the sport.

"We met last year," explains Sahota. "I got offered the role of Peter Pan at the Hoddesdon theatre and that's where Sam did Aladdin. I reached out [via social media] to the actors and said I'd got Peter Pan and he was like, 'that's brilliant'. I wanted to ask him what the theatre was like. He was like, 'you cheeky boy, I wanted that role!'"

The pair began chatting and quickly found a shared interest in motorsport. "I first met him on track at Donington Park and got on

"People think motorsport is this golden realm you can't get into, but it's not impossible"

so well," continues Sahota. "I bought myself a track car a week later."

The Drivers Side was born soon after and this features Sahota and Callahan producing videos about their racing experiences and using their social media following to spread the word about how it's possible for people to compete in motorsport without it costing huge sums of money.

"Our goal is to bring as many people as we can into motorsport," says Sahota. "The whole idea is to show, no matter what you're passionate about, go and grab it and go and do it. We want to show that motorsport is accessible – a lot of people do think motorsport is this golden realm you can't get into, but it's not impossible.

"I've recently done my ARDS test – it was supposed to be done before but, because of COVID, it got cancelled. Getting my ARDS test, I did a video for the people who run the school and

did a 'how to become a racing driver' video. We got some really good responses from it."

The company remains in its infancy but there are bold plans for the future. A pair of Toyota MR2s have been bought, which the duo will not only race but also offer experience days in, to give people that first taste of on-track action. They are particularly targeting those who have long held an interest in motorsport but have never taken that step to actually compete.

The pair also plan to use their contacts from the TV world to get a few famous faces in their cars later this year, to again increase awareness in UK motorsport. Before then, Sahota is now looking forward to making his racing debut, potentially at Donington Park later this month. Despite The Drivers Side still being in its early stages he says "it's so rewarding to be a part of" and admits, "if I could reverse the years and not be a singer, I would go back and be a racing driver".

Anything that encourages more people to get involved with the sport we love has to be encouraged and Sahota and Callahan have the potential to attract a completely new audience. That may be one which is very different to the traditional club racing competitor but, in many ways, that makes their efforts even more beneficial.

On these pages a couple of months ago (18 March), Rachel Harris-Gardiner made some excellent points about the way in which celebrity races used to draw in the crowds and be a fantastic way of building new interest in the sport. Initiatives like Sahota and Callahan are planning are perhaps the modern-day equivalent of those John Webb-inspired contests full of famous faces.

Another 21st century way of attracting attention from the wider public is by livestreaming events and the second appearance of YouTube star Jimmy Broadbent in the Britcar Endurance Championship at Snetterton last weekend again helped draw in vast numbers for the British Automobile Racing Club's livestream of the meeting. This is another perfect example of how to initially engage potential racers of the future in the world of club motorsport. And that is something we should all be pleased about.

● You may have noticed a slight change to the National section of Autosport this week. We have introduced an internal cover in the magazine to signify the start of our coverage of club motorsport and really highlight this important part of what we do. This is just the latest in a number of steps we have taken to showcase our continued commitment to UK motorsport, including introducing a monthly National podcast and featuring a more diverse range of disciplines, such as following the British Rallycross and British Rally championships. ❧

JOCA SUPPORTS THRUXTON 8-9 MAY

Hedley stars in dramatic F4 season opener

BRITISH FORMULA 4

When James Hedley ended the first lap of the final British Formula 4 race of the Thruxton weekend in the barriers at the Club chicane, it looked like he had undone the work he put in to win the opening two contests.

The Fortec driver had bounced over the inside kerb, sending him into the path of Kai Askey, while Matias Zagazeta and Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak also got collected. But, with the timetable behind schedule, the red-flagged race was not restarted until after the touring car finale, giving Hedley a second chance. Three corners of his Mygale were damaged, but the Fortec crew was able to get him back out. And, despite the handling being far from ideal, Hedley completed a remarkable turnaround with third place.

"I wanted to score as many points as I could and would've been happy just to stay where I was [eighth]," said Hedley. "The boys and girls at Fortec did an amazing job. The tracking was still out, but what we managed to get out of that race was unbelievable."

Hedley's weekend did not have the best of starts when he only qualified



Hedley fought back from crash to take third in restarted finale after earlier wins

ninth at his local circuit, a venue where he had previously won three F4 contests and two Ginetta Junior races. But an inspired call to go for slick tyres on the drying track netted him the opening win, his lead over 10 seconds at one point as those on wets floundered.

"I was a little bit sceptical – my dad [ex-F3 racer Gray] was screaming at me to use slicks and I have to thank him for his wise words," said Hedley. "I pushed more than the other guys on slicks. I went full attack and managed to get that lead."

Hedley was one of five drivers to opt for slicks, and Joel Granfors and Zagazeta had a thrilling battle for second, until

Zagazeta decided it was better to settle for a podium than risk damage.

It then took Hedley fewer than five laps to surge into the reversed-grid (from qualifying) race-two lead, while Zak Taylor defended brilliantly and was only passed for second by Granfors late on.

Aside from Hedley, the other main talking point was the pace of the JHR drivers. They locked out the top four in qualifying but suffered from sticking with wets in the opener. However, Fiesta Junior champion Joseph Loake brought some cheer, fending off team-mate McKenzie Cresswell to win the wet finale.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Steed the avenger as he bounces back to win

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE

Josh Steed was the avenger at Thruxton last weekend, when he took honours in the Sunday race to make up for what was arguably a lost victory the previous day.

Steed, who had claimed pole in the wet qualifying session by 0.9 seconds, gambled

on fitting wet-weather tyres on a drier surface for the opening race. That might still have worked, but a red flag on the initial start was followed by a safety car after Steed had pulled out a mammoth 2.776s on the first lap of the restart.

Still Steed sprinted clear by 3.6s within one lap when the race got going again,

with time for 10 laps of racing. But he was living on borrowed time. Within three more laps, he had been overhauled by the chasing quartet of John Bennett, Will Aspin, a guesting Max Coates and David Ellesley. Bennett pulled clear to lead Aspin home by 2.5s, with Ellesley third and Coates fourth after a hairy 360-degree spin at Church.

Steed trailed home sixth, but put things right on Sunday. Bennett qualified sixth but, following another early safety car, he moved up to second when Ellesley got onto the grass at Church. Now he set off after Steed's steed, but the leader held firm and kept Bennett at arm's length, eventually winning by 1.5s. As Ellesley fell to fifth, Aspin won a terrific scrap with Haytham Qarajouli to wrest third on the final lap.

Marc Warren looked the class of the concurrent G40 Cup field in qualifying, but was beaten by Nick White in race one before imposing himself on top in the sequel.

MARCUS SIMMONS



Steed made up for opening-race disappointment with a win

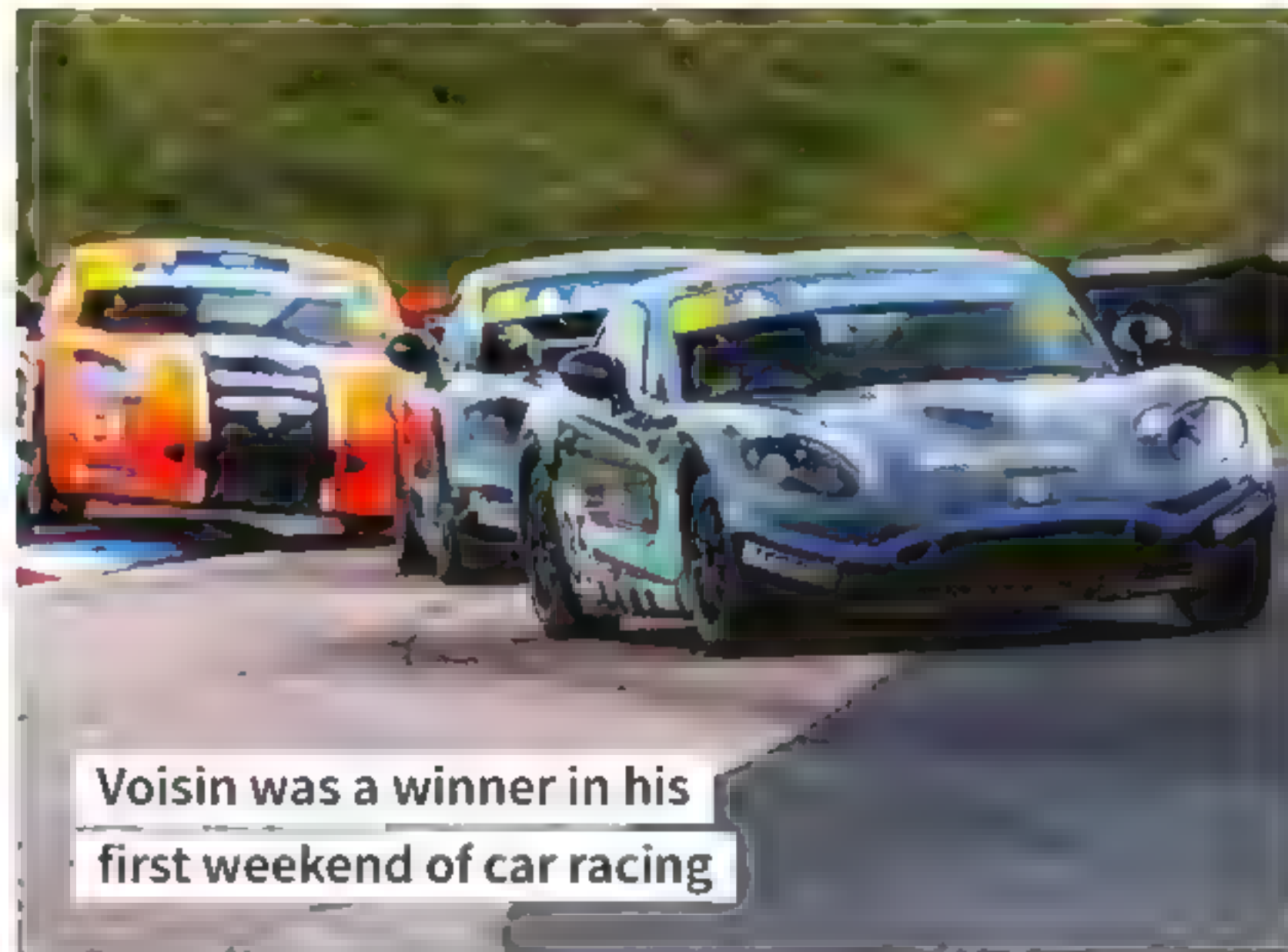
More success for Voisin family

GINETTA JUNIOR

Last month it was Bailey Voisin who was a winner in his first senior car race in European GT4. Now it was the turn of his younger brother Callum to be victorious in his maiden car racing weekend in Ginetta Junior.

The younger Voisin threatened to win a frenetic opening Thruxton race, challenging R Racing team-mate Josh Miller out of Church on the final lap but ran out of room to make the move and fell to fifth, admitting he was a “bit too eager”.

There were no such troubles in the second encounter. After a slow start, Voisin hit the front by passing Aston Millar out of Church on lap six of nine,



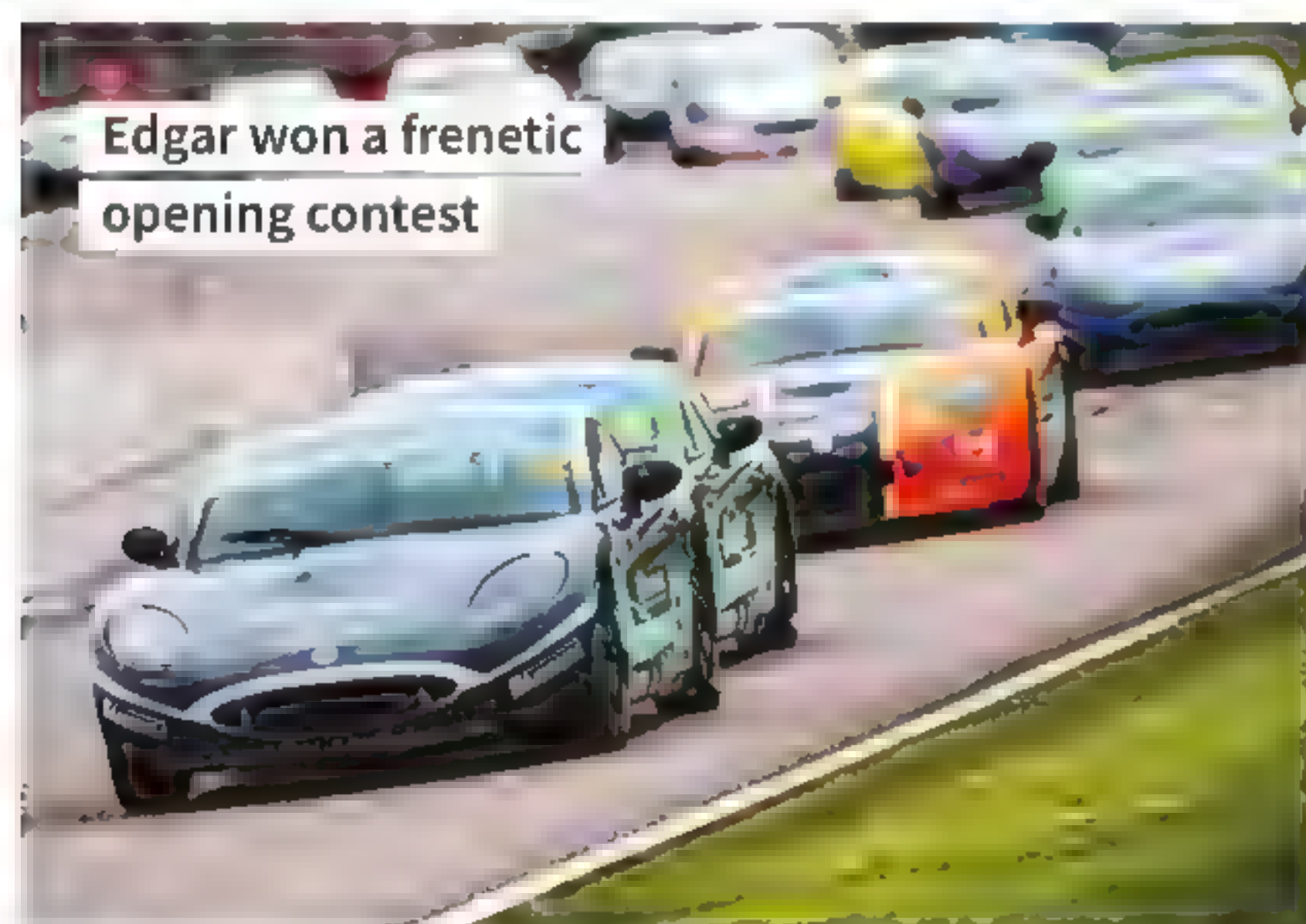
Voisin was a winner in his first weekend of car racing

then resisted a gaggle of cars to the flag. A delighted Voisin did not expect to win on his first weekend in the category and said his brother — third in last year's standings — “helped me a lot with little tips”.

Earlier, Millar and Seb Hopkins had battled initially in race one but it was Millar who grabbed the advantage until a caution period. Star 2020 rookie Tom Edgar pounced on the restart out of Church before it was then Miller's turn to lead.

He just stayed ahead until the final tour when his stern defence let Edgar through to win and Hopkins, being coached by Porsche ace Harry King, was promoted to second after Miller cut the chicane.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Edgar won a frenetic opening contest

Edgerton stakes early claim

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Theo Edgerton staked an early claim for the Porsche Sprint Challenge GB title after a comfortable double win at Thruxton.

The wet qualifying created a topsy-turvy grid for the opener, with Am drivers Ian Humphris and Nigel Rice starting on the front row. But it took less than a lap for Total Control Racing driver Edgerton to storm into the lead and he soon built a comfortable advantage. Ethan Hawkey did start hunting him

down late on, but Edgerton was still nearly three seconds ahead of his fellow former Ginetta Junior racer by the flag.

Edgerton then led throughout the second contest, while Jack Bartholomew grabbed runner-up spot from Hawkey on the inside at Noble with three laps to go.

The best battle of the weekend was for the Am class spoils in the opener. Rice had been closing on Humphris for several laps and challenged him into the final corner, but spun and then had no answer to Humphris in race two.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Edgerton was at the front of the field for both races

WEEKEND WINNERS

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Race 1 (16 laps) 1 James Hedley; 2 Joel Granfors +1.452s; 3 Matias Zagazeta; 4 Eduardo Coseteng; 5 Zak Taylor; 6 Oliver Gray. **Fastest lap** Zagazeta 1m16.771s (110.48mph). **Pole** Matthew Rees. **Starters** 16. **Race 2 (16 laps) 1 Hedley;** 2 Granfors +7.323s; 3 Taylor; 4 Tasanapol Inthraphuvasak; 5 Abbi Pulling; 6 Tom Ikin. **FL** Coseteng 1m14.186s (114.33mph). **P** Ikin. **S** 16. **Race 3 (11 laps) 1 Joseph Loake;** 2 McKenzie Cresswell +0.903s; 3 Hedley; 4 Gray; 5 Rees; 6 Dougie Bolger. **FL** Coseteng 1m21.498s (104.07mph). **P** Rees. **S** 16. **Points** 1 Hedley 55; 2 Granfors 34; 3 Loake 25; 4 Cresswell 22; 5 Taylor 20; 6 Gray 20.

GINETTA GT5 CHALLENGE & G40 CUP

Race 1 (both 15 laps) 1 John Bennett; 2 Will Aspin +2.477s; 3 David Ellesley; 4 Max Coates; 5 Will Rochford; 6 Josh Steed. **FL** Coates 1m26.535s (98.01mph). **P** Steed. **S** 32. **Race 2 1 Steed;** 2 Bennett +1.547s; 3 Aspin; 4 Haytham Qarajouli; 5 Ellesley; 6 Conner Garlick. **FL** Aspin 1m24.514s (100.35mph). **P** Steed. **S** 31. **Points** 1 Bennett 65; 2 Aspin 57; 3 Steed 54; 4 Ellesley 46; 5 Will Rochford 34; 6 Coates 33.

GINETTA JUNIOR

Race 1 (12 laps) 1 Tom Edgar; 2 Seb Hopkins +0.727s; 3 Josh Miller; 4 Aston Millar; 5 Callum Voisin; 6 Joe Wheeler. **FL** Will Jenkins 1m31.965s (92.23mph). **P** Millar. **S** 27. **Race 2 (9 laps) 1 Voisin;** 2 Millar +0.505s; 3 Hopkins; 4 Robert de Haan; 5 Edgar; 6 Jenkins. **FL** Liam McNeilly 1m32.092s (92.10mph). **P** Hopkins. **S** 27. **Points** 1 Hopkins 56; 2 Voisin 55; 3 Edgar 55; 4 Millar 53; 5 Miller 38; 6 Jenkins 35.

PORSCHE SPRINT CHALLENGE GB

Race 1 (16 laps) 1 Theo Edgerton; 2 Ethan Hawkey +2.837s; 3 Charles Clark; 4 Jack Bartholomew; 5 Ian Humphris; 6 Nigel Rice. **FL** Hawkey 1m21.196s (104.45mph). **P** Humphris. **S** 12. **Race 2 (12 laps) 1 Edgerton;** 2 Bartholomew +6.517s; 3 Hawkey; 4 Humphris; 5 Rice; 6 Matthew Armstrong. **FL** Edgerton 1m16.775s (110.47mph). **P** Edgerton. **S** 12. **Points** 1 Edgerton 22; 2 Hawkey 15; 3 Bartholomew 13; 4 Armstrong 9; 5 Clark 6.

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Race 1 (12 laps) 1 Matthew Hammond; 2 Dominic Wheatley +0.094s; 3 Lewis Saunders; 4 Louie Capozzoli; 5 Nicky Taylor; 6 Josh Porter. **FL** Morgan Wroot 1m38.174s (86.39mph). **P** Alex Solley. **S** 30. **Race 2 (7 laps) 1 Harry Nunn;** 2 Wheatley +1.812s; 3 Taylor; 4 Solley; 5 Hammond; 6 Nelson King. **FL** Taylor 1m36.036s (88.31mph). **P** Hammond. **S** 30. **Race 3 (13 laps) 1 Solley;** 2 Hammond +0.164s; 3 Wheatley; 4 Brendan Fitzgerald; 5 Charlie Mann; 6 Taylor. **FL** Mann 1m33.066s (91.13mph). **P** King. **S** 29. **Points** 1 Hammond 221; 2 Wheatley 211; 3 Nunn 177; 4 Solley 167; 5 Ricky Page 143; 6 Taylor 130.

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

TOCA SUPPORTS THRUXTON 8-9 MAY

Big thrills from entertaining Mini contests

MINI CHALLENGE TROPHY

Single-seaters usually provide some of the best slipstreaming contests at Thruxton, but last weekend it was the Mini Challenge Cooper class that produced some thrilling action at the Hampshire speedbowl with three breathless races.

The first was held in drying conditions on Saturday afternoon, and this meant the Goodyear wets took a pounding with drivers battling on the ragged edge. It was Matt Hammond who grabbed the initial advantage, going around the outside of polesitter Alex Solley at Allard, but his lead did not last for long.

Solley, Louie Capozzoli and Lewis Saunders all had stints at the head of the pack as the power of the tow meant there was a new leader at the chicane each time, before Capozzoli began inching away during his third spell in front.

But Hammond, who dropped to sixth at one stage, grabbed top spot back on the penultimate lap with a move at Club. He was under intense pressure from 2020 runner-up Dominic Wheatley heading into the chicane on the final lap, and Wheatley almost hit the pitwall in his desperate attempts to outdrag Hammond to the flag, but ultimately fell 0.094 seconds short.

"I thought I went a lap too early as I got

a really good tow and crossed the line with a minute to go," said Hammond. "Coming into the last corner, I was fully locked up, sideways."

Wheatley added: "It was pretty wild with places changing all the time. It was like we were all racing on jelly – I was trying to preserve my tyres for the end. It was about slowly picking them off and I was one metre away from winning!"

The second contest had to be restarted after Josh Porter tipped Capozzoli into a spin at the Complex, with the stranded LDR driver then collected by Morgan Wroot and Mike Paul, with Paul sent onto his roof. Reigning champion Harry Nunn snatched the lead midway through the shortened contest, while Wheatley claimed another second.

It was virtually five-abreast out of the Complex on the opening lap of the finale, and Solley was the one to lose out as he had a massive slide through Noble and dropped to 11th.

But the Junior Saloon graduate staged an impressive recovery, twice grabbing the lead. The decisive move came through Church, and he withstood an attacking Hammond into the chicane for the final time to land a maiden win in the series. "I didn't think I would actually save that!" he admitted about his opening-lap moment.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



HOW HAMMOND IS LEADING THE WAY ON HIS RETURN TO RACING

Picking a champion from the huge Mini Challenge Cooper class grid before the start of the season was tricky. With Junior Saloon Car stars Lewis Saunders and Alex Solley and successful karter Louie Capozzoli joining race winners from last year – including the top two in the points, Harry Nunn and Dominic Wheatley – there was no shortage of potential victors.

But it's another driver who has grabbed the early initiative: Matt Hammond. The 2017 category champion had not raced since winning that crown, but is back for this year with Excelr8 and has been instantly on the pace, starting with qualifying in the opening event at Snetterton last month.

"I stuck it on P1 at Snetterton and now second at Thruxton," he said. "I'm well chuffed! Excelr8 Motorsport is doing a fantastic job with the car."

Budget has always been a limiting factor for Hammond. He made his racing debut in

2014 in the Coopers and managed to get on the podium during that first season, landing the top-rookie prize. But the start of 2015 did not yield such good results and he decided to withdraw and refocus his funds on a fresh bid, which came with Excelr8 in 2017. After winning that title, he was unable to continue racing the following season.

"I was working with the [Excelr8] touring car team and the JCW programme – I was just trying to keep in it," he explained. "I've been trying to get out in one of these ever since – it's been a long time coming!"

Despite his strong start to the campaign, with a victory at Snetterton and a further win and a second at his local Thruxton circuit, Hammond admits the category has moved on a lot since he was last competing. "It's double what the grids were before," he said, adding that the lure of three appearances on the British Touring Car support bill has helped give the series a boost.

He was not expecting to be on the pace quite



so quickly, saying: "I just wanted to be there or thereabouts. There was a bit of pressure on me from 2017, but I'm just doing what I can."

So far, that plan is working pretty well as Hammond sits 10 points clear at the top of the standings, having very much staked his claim for a title bid against his plethora of rivals this year.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Safety car prevents a Seale and Stanley Britcar clean sweep

**SNETTERTON
BARC
8-9 MAY**

John Seale and Jamie Stanley easily secured a third Britcar Endurance victory of 2021, after an inopportune safety car handed John Dhillon an insurmountable advantage to wrap up victory in the opening encounter at Snetterton.

The fortuitous mid-race interlude allowed the late-stopping Ferrari of Dhillon to benefit from a slip by Jay Morton at Oggies to lead the dominant Lamborghini home, despite Seale having an early spin at Turn 3 that dropped him to 19th. Further back, Johnny Mowlem held off the potent Nissan GT3 of Danny Harrison for third.

An early safety car in race two wiped out Phil Quaife's advantage, in Dhillon's Ferrari 488, allowing Stanley to cruise to victory. "We got lucky with the safety car this time," said Stanley. "After passing the Nissan it was pretty straightforward."

A late charge by the Praga R1 of Chris

Wesemael/Richard Morris clinched third place from Mowlem in Bonamy Grimes's polesitting Ferrari 458.

Oliver Reuben had to overcome a spin at Wilson and a 10-second deficit to Mark Lee to take victory in the opening Britcar Trophy race with a pass into Brundle on the penultimate lap. The BMW M3 of Jasver Sapra had led the race, but a penalty for speeding in the pitlane ended his challenge.

Reuben didn't make any mistakes in his opening stint of race two, handing over the BMW 1 Series to Simon Baker with a healthy lead. Lee took up the chase after his pitstop and entered the final lap over three seconds in arrears, before outbraking the leader at the final corner, but the Ginetta G56 was unable to win the drag race to the finish line. "I didn't realised Mark was that close," admitted a relieved Baker, who narrowly kept his winning streak intact.

Tyre selection decided the outcome of the first Mini Miglia race, with poleman Andrew Jordan's slick-tyred car easily outpacing the field. Rupert Deeth, also slick-shod, left the best of the grooved-tyre runners, Ben Colburn and Aaron Smith, squabbling over third.

Just as race two started, so did the rain, which Jordan took advantage of as he weaved his way to the front from eighth on the grid by the end of the opening lap. As the rain abated, Smith started to close in on the leader, but the former British Touring Car Championship racer upped his pace to hold off the challenge to claim a second victory.

Jamie Winrow looked well in control of the first Caterham Sigma 150 race only to find dropped liquid at Brundle, and the



WEEKEND WINNERS

BRITCAR ENDURANCE

Race 1 John Dhillon (Ferrari 488 Challenge)

Race 2 John Seale/Jamie Stanley (Lamborghini Huracan GT3)

BRITCAR TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 Steve Baker/Oliver Reuben (BMW 1 Series)

MINI MIGLIA

Races 1 & 2 Andrew Jordan

CATERHAM GRADUATES - SIGMA 150

Race 1 Jamie Ellwood

Race 2 Jamie Winrow

MINI SE7EN

Races 1 & 2 Jeff Smith

HYUNDAI COUPE CUP

Shane Stoney

CATERHAM GRADUATES - SIGMAX/135

Races 1 & 2 Harry Senior (Sigmax)

JUNIOR SALOON CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Races 1 & 2 Charlie Hand

SUPERKARTS

Races 1, 2 & 3 Liam Morley (Anderson/VM)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

ensuing half spin elevated Jamie Ellwood to victory. But Ellwood's run of wins came to an end in race two as his own half spin, on the rain-affected surface at Nelson, allowed Winrow to pass on the penultimate lap and greet the flag first.

Jeff Smith crushed the opposition in the opening Mini Se7en race, leading from lights to flag. Starting eighth in race two made life more difficult but, by the end of lap three, he had unseated leader Spencer Wanstall at Brundle. A hectic battle ensued in Smith's wake, with Jonathan Lewis fighting both Wanstall and Connor O'Brien for the position, before O'Brien grabbed second on the final lap at the Esses.

LEWIS BEALES



In the two dry races, Walker was the class of the FF1600 field

Walker battles to double National FF1600 success

DONINGTON PARK
BRSCC
8-9 MAY

Rising stars took on the established names and came out on top in the opening weekend of the National Formula Ford Championship at Donington Park. Alex Walker led the way with two storming wins in the dry after Rory Smith's wet-weather success on Saturday.

A thinner field than in recent years did not reduce the sharp end's intensity. American teenager Max Esterson (Ray GR18) harried polesitter Chris Middlehurst's Van Diemen LA10 in race one, before Festival winner Smith maximised his Medina JL18's traction to close in and passed the pair in one move at the Roberts chicane. With Smith's exit compromised, the trio ran three-wide into Redgate, Middlehurst spinning as he clipped Esterson's right rear. B-M Racing's Smith was chased home by Esterson, with the Kevin Mills Racing Spectrum 011C of Walker third from seventh on the grid.

Walker's progress continued in race two. He led within half a lap, passing Smith into Redgate and benefiting from Esterson's mistake at the Old Hairpin. A mid-race safety car was no hindrance as Walker eased to a 6.6-second victory. Second for Jamie Sharp was his best yet, albeit after making contact with team-mate Smith – who recovered to fourth behind Esterson – as he passed him.

From eighth on the reversed grid, Walker was third within three laps of the final race, then prevailed in his scrap with Smith and Luke Cooper (Swift SC18). "It's not shabby, is it? Two firsts and a third," grinned the triumphant youngster.

One-time National champion Middlehurst's weekend worsened with two punctures, while clutch, brake and engine temperature woes severely hampered triple Festival winner Joey Foster's updated Firman chassis.

Last year's 310R runner-up James Murphy rebounded from stalling on Saturday's grid to win the next morning on his debut in the Caterham Seven UK Championship.

Murphy pounced as the leaders lapped the 310R frontrunners, but was chased down by race one winner Stephen Nuttall. Having nipped past at Roberts on the penultimate lap, Nuttall intended to repeat the move after allowing Murphy back ahead, only to be thwarted by yellow flags.

Nuttall survived contact with team-mate Gordon Sawyer to prevail again in the finale, which was prematurely halted when the two leading packs converged. Murphy was edged onto the grass approaching McLeans but held on to third behind old 310R foe Greg Monks, as several others were left in the gravel. Pete Walters avoided the trouble to take his second 310R win, sandwiching Lars Hoffmann's success in race two.

Caterham Academy champions Taylor O'Flanagan and Tom Cockerill split the wins in two typically thrilling Roadsport races. The pair swapped the lead with Dominique Mannsperger throughout Sunday's race before O'Flanagan's trip through the McLeans gravel as they ran three-wide on the final lap. Cockerill triumphed over Mannsperger by just 0.136s. Hugo Bush, part of the lead group before an off in Saturday's wet prequel won by O'Flanagan, carved through from the back of the grid to sixth, despite skating across the gravel as he challenged the leaders on the last bend.

Third in the 270R opener behind Will Rossetti and Harry Eyre, Blair McConachie scored an 11s victory in the sequel from former Ginetta man Rob Keogh and Eyre.

The 38-car CityCar Cup field included 23 novices, and the experienced Nic Grindrod was unchallenged en route to two sizeable wins. Duncan Stone and top novice Liam Browning headed a terrific tussle for the remaining podium places in race two after Stuart Bliss and Patrick Booth had done so



Nuttall was the man to beat in Caterham Seven UK races, winning twice

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: WALKER

WEEKEND WINNERS

NATIONAL FF1600

Race 1 Rory Smith (Medina JL18)

Races 2 & 3 Alex Walker (Spectrum 011C)

CATERHAM SEVEN UK/310R

Races 1 & 3 Stephen Nuttall (420R)

Race 2 James Murphy (420R)

CATERHAM ROADSPORT

Race 1 Taylor O'Flanagan

Race 2 Tom Cockerill

CATERHAM 270R

Race 1 Will Rossetti

Race 2 Blair McConachie

CITYCAR CUP

Races 1 & 2 Nic Grindrod (Citroen C1)

FUN CUP

UVio/Hofmann's Lotus

(Scott Fitzgerald/Fabio Randaccio)

AMOC JACK FAIRMAN CUP/INNES IRELAND CUP/MIKE HAWTHORN TROPHY

Rob Fenn (Lotus Elan, below)

AMOC GT/GT4/INTERMARQUE

Nigel Jenkins (Ferrari 458)

MODIFIED FORDS

Race 1 Wayne Crabtree (Ford RS200)

Race 2 Dave Cockell (Ford Escort Cosworth)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

in the less frantic opener.

Past champions Fabio Randaccio and Scott Fitzgerald (UVio/Hofmann's Lotus) stormed to a Fun Cup victory of more than a lap over Despatch Bay's Andy Bicknell/Harry Mailer. Former United States Formula 4 driver Teddy Wilson's rapid opening stint couldn't be matched by his Track Focused team-mates, so only the Viking Self Storage Car of Nigel Greensall/Mark Holme threatened the eventual winners, but lost a lap fixing a coil issue.

After clearing the four Mike Hawthorn Trophy Jaguar Mk1s that qualified ahead of him, Rob Fenn eased his Lotus Elan to victory in the Innes Ireland Cup. Leading Jack Fairman Cup runner Ian Dalglish (Lotus 17), who also struggled in the greasy morning conditions as he qualified mid-grid, made rapid progress to second.

MARK PAULSON

A BOOMING NEW HOME FOR FORDS

Crabtree's RS200 won opening contest after Cockell's strife



Like the Aston Martin Owners Club's GT and historic categories, the Modified Fords series joined the British Racing & Sports Car Club's roster at Donington Park for the first time.

It was started last year by long-time racer Paul Nevill as a broad church for racing Fords, free from restrictive regulations. If the car has a production shell and Ford-based engine, it's welcome.

It's a concept that clearly works. After a handful of events in 2020, mainly sharing a grid with other categories, the fledgling series has boomed. There were 35 cars in action at Donington, while a fixture on the Silverstone International circuit in March had received more than 50 entries before it fell victim to the delayed start to the year.

Numbers were lower at the rearranged Lydden opener, but next month's Mallory Park date is oversubscribed and the series' flagship event at Brands Hatch's Ford Power Live in September already has over 70 provisional entries.

"I wanted to get the best I could for the guys," said Nevill. "We did a few races last year, and the enthusiasm and support was superb. They want somewhere where they can race the cars."

Nevill highlights the series' non-championship status, its sliding scale of entry fees (which reduce as more drivers book their spots on the grid),



Cockell took victory in the second Modified Ford race

and transparency with entry lists, which are available online for the remainder of 2021, as key factors for its early success.

"Racing now, people view it differently," he added. "I don't think championship status means as much. They dip in and dip out and choose where they want to go. I don't own anybody – let them do what they like."

Having big names such as Scalextric on board as sponsors is a further endorsement, and enables four draws to take place each weekend with prizes such as tools or vouchers to the value of £100, sharing the benefits throughout the grid.

On track, a straightforward class structure, which essentially separates the V8s and turbos from two classes for normally aspirated machinery, keeps things simple.

"Everybody's car is different," said Nevill. "You won't find one car here that would fit into tight regulations."

Entries at Donington ranged from Simon Light's V8 Capri (complete with carbon-fibre body panels, BMW suspension and GT3 Dodge Viper rear wing) to 1600cc Fiestas via 'Zakspeed' Group 5 and Millington-engined Escorts.

Wins were shared by the Subaru-powered spaceframe RS200 of Wayne Crabtree and Dave Cockell's 750bhp Mk5 Escort Cosworth, with its Smith and Jones aluminium block.

Cockell never looked like being beaten until his gearstick came off in the opener. He then needed little more than half of race two's 12 laps to charge through from the back of the grid. Light was third on each occasion, beaten by Ashley Shelswell's Sierra XR4i in the opener after his dash-mounted phone (for telemetry) fell into the pedal box and caused a spin.

MARK PAULSON

Evans wins amid safety car confusion

BRANDS HATCH

MSVR

8-9 MAY

A well-timed pitstop and safety car confusion allowed Jonathan Evans to win the combined Bernie's V8s/CALM Porsche Trophy 40-minute contest at Brands Hatch.

Evans started his Porsche Cayman S fifth and initially ran at the back of a leading quintet, headed by the TVR Tuscan of poleman Matt Holben, Christian Douglas and Jason Clegg, with the Talbot Sunbeam Lotus of Martyn/Matthew Ellis also in the mix.

Holben soon dropped to third as Evans began losing touch with the leading machines, but he was handed a lifeline when a safety car was called to retrieve a stricken Porsche 968 from the Paddock Hill Bend gravel as the pit window opened. Inexplicably, the leading four cars failed to make their mandatory pitstops at the first opportunity, allowing Evans to take a net lead once the stops had shaken out.

Adam Southgate's Porsche Boxster 986 S moved into second, from Christopher Ridge (Tuscan) and James Coleman (Cayman), with Douglas the highest-placed runner from the initial leading group in fifth. But Douglas then had a heavy front-end crash on the Grand Prix loop at the restart in an incident that also forced Ridge and Clegg out.

Confusion then reigned as the safety car picked up Hugh Peart's #136 Porsche 924, not the #36 of Evans. With Andrew Knight's Pontiac ASCAR also effectively acting as a second safety car, the front trio were given a half-lap lead as the race resumed for one final tour.

The officials' mistake still wasn't



rectified as Peart, running in 30th, was shown the chequered flag first, but it was Evans who took the win from Southgate. Coleman finished third, despite a 30-second penalty for a short pitstop that was negated by the safety car confusion. Holben took fourth and was the top Bernie's V8 runner despite a spin at Druids.

Darren Goes came out on top of the MSV Supercup race, after a late red flag prevented early leaders Nick Jackson/Ollie Pidgley from overturning his deficit. Jackson's SEAT Supercopa led as Goes charged through from 13th in his SEAT, having crashed in a wet qualifying, and was up to second by lap eight. He was into the lead three tours later, after Jackson took to the grass at Dingle Dell lapping a backmarker before handing over to Pidgley.

The former British Touring Car Championship driver whittled the lead gap down to five seconds with six minutes remaining, but the race came to a premature

end after a heavy accident for SEAT Leon Cupra R driver Barrie Culley at Clearways. Scott and Ryan Parkin's VW Golf completed the podium and was Class A winner.

An off at Paddock Bend in a wet qualifying session put Radical Challenge championship leader Jerome de Sadeleer on the back foot. The Swiss started race one seventh and, after climbing to fourth, retired on lap three with a damaged rear-wing mount while main title rival Matt Bell took victory in slippery conditions. Bell doubled up in the drier second sprint race, again from Anthony Ayres, while de Sadeleer finished third after overtaking Jason Rishover on the final lap.

De Sadeleer led the 45-minute contest from pole under constant pressure from Bell. Because the pair had to serve success penalties at their mandatory pitstops, the lead and victory was handed to front-row starter Mark Richards. De Sadeleer recovered to second, with Rishover managing to hold onto third from Bell.

Simon Hill and Martyn Walsh shared the Production GTI wins after two close races. Hill won the opener from fourth on the grid with a well-timed pass on Walsh into Surtees. Walsh then grabbed the race two win on the final lap, having tracked Hill all race. Chris Murphy took both concurrent Z Cars/New Production BMW wins.

Nigel Innes's lightning start from sixth on the grid in his BMW E36 M3 allowed him to win the first Racing Saloons and Production BMW/Golf race. He remained unchallenged from the race two rolling start.

Dan Gore in his Mittell-run Jedi was the class of the Monoposto field, surging through from sixth in the opener and winning race two from pole. Chris Davison and James Drew-Williams each took F3 honours.

STEFAN MACKLEY



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: HAWKINS



Evans (36) and Southgate (45) finished top of the Bernie's V8s/CALM Porsche race

WEEKEND WINNERS



BERNIE'S V8s/CALM PORSCHE TROPHY

Jonathan Evans (Porsche Cayman S)

MSV SUPERCUP

Darren Goes (SEAT Cup Racer)

RADICAL CHALLENGE

Races 1 & 2 Matt Bell (SR3)

Race 3 Mark Richards (SR3)

PRODUCTION GTI/Z CARS

Race 1 Simon Hill (VW Golf GTI)

Race 2 Martyn Walsh (VW Golf GTI)

RACING SALOONS/PRODUCTION GOLF & BMW

Races 1 & 2 Nigel Innes (BMW E36 M3)

MONOPOSTO

Races 1 & 2 Dan Gore (Jedi Mk6)

SPORTS 2000

Race 1 Josh Law (MCR S2)

Race 2 Michael Gibbins (MCR S2)

SR1 CUP

Races 1 & 2 Will Hunt (above)

CMMC SOUTHERN SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Rod Birley (Ford Escort WRC)

MSVR ALLCOMERS

Races 1 & 2 Scott Mittell (Mittell MC-41RR)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

STATUS QUO AS RIVALS BATTLE AGAIN



Gibbins (1) and Stoten again starred in Sports 2000

Michael Gibbins or Tom Stoten. Tom Stoten or Michael Gibbins. The Sports 2000 pecking order has been topped by one or the other for the past five years, and the series has been underlined by a hard-fought rivalry on track but a friendly one off it.

Last year it was all about Gibbins though, as he went on to win every race and his second title on the bounce, his third overall. After a switch to a new MCR S2 with carbon-fibre bodywork for 2021, the reigning champion's season couldn't have got off to a worse start at Donington Park last month when a collision with a backmarker put him out in race one and prevented him from starting race two.

"It's been a busy month [since the crash], the car has been back to MCR twice for chassis repairs, bodywork and new suspension," said Gibbins.

A wet qualifying on the Brands Hatch GP circuit didn't help matters, and Gibbins could only manage fourth on the grid, with main rival Stoten on pole. Stoten, the 2017 and 2018 Duratec champion, had taken a double win at Donington, with the new rear bodywork and floor on his Gunn TS11b offering a substantial upgrade in performance. But his new aero parts counted for nothing off the line at Brands where, on a damp track, he "just could not put any power down" and slumped into

the midst of the pack by Paddock Bend.

Stoten had recovered to fifth by the time a safety car was called on the second lap for two stricken cars on the exit of Druids, while fellow front-row starter Dominic Lesniewski headed an MCR S2 train of Josh Law and Gibbins.

Thanks to a crash in qualifying, Lesniewski was suffering from damaged steering and it wasn't long before Law found a way past into Druids. Gibbins also made his way into second a lap later, but the lead gap was already more than four seconds with just five laps remaining.

Gibbins's attention soon turned to his old rival, with Stoten having managed to get into third and gaining on last year's champion, but the still-damp conditions proved to be the Gunn driver's downfall.

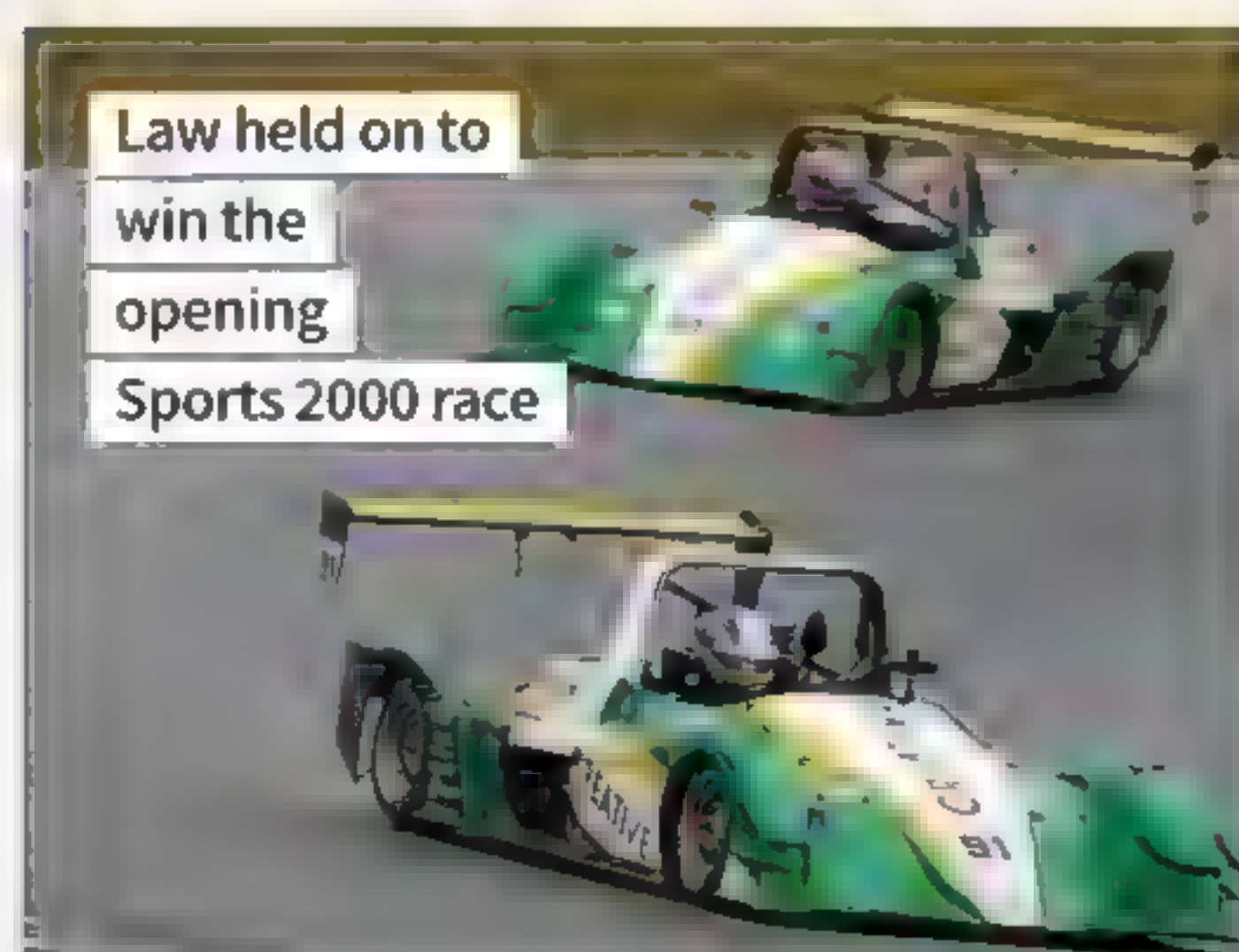
"I got a sniff of Michael, got excited and spun on the way up the hill [out of Surtees], which was just really frustrating," said Stoten, who dropped to fourth behind Lesniewski.

At the front, Gibbins had slashed the gap to Law and crossed the line just over half a second in arrears. "Another lap or two and I would have been able to give him a hard time," said Gibbins.

He made up for the disappointment in race two, getting the jump on polesitter Law to lead, with Stoten getting a flier from fourth to second by Paddock. The small gap between the pair remained almost static until the flag and, like previous seasons, their battle promises to rage all year.

It wasn't just at the head of the field where things were tight. In the concurrent Pinto class for older machines, Chris Snowdon snatched the class win on the line from long-time leader Paul Streat, before Streat managed to hold on for a well-deserved win in race two.

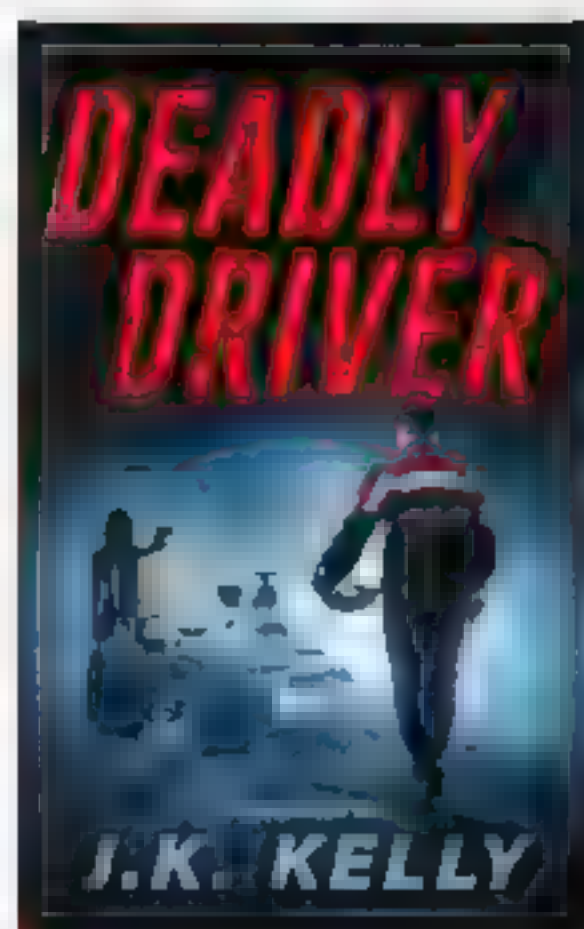
STEFAN MACKLEY



Law held on to win the opening Sports 2000 race



DEADLY OCCUPATION IN MORE



BOOK REVIEW
DEADLY DRIVER
 RRP £9.20

Traveling across the globe, never staying in one place for more than a couple of nights during the course of a season, the life of a Formula 1 driver is fast-paced both on and off the track – and at times a

lonely existence. But the jet-setting lifestyle is also the chance to mingle with celebrities and politicians, allowing access to places other people could only dream of. All of which makes for the perfect cover to be a hitman, right?

It's an interesting premise and one that forms the plot of *Deadly Driver*, by JK Kelly, which is due for release later this year. It follows Bryce Winters, a proud American who not only happens to be one of the world's top racing drivers but also an undercover operative for the CIA. Think Lewis Hamilton working for MI6, tasked with eliminating certain targets during a grand prix weekend – all while continuing to win on track for Mercedes.

The book charts Winters's rise from the dirt tracks of the US, where he has his first taste of killing, to F1 stardom, all while being blackmailed by the CIA after the organisation discovers details about his shady past.

Winters is no ordinary driver though, obviously – he's the best, having won an F1 title, an IndyCar crown, plus the Indy 500 and Daytona 500, which makes him probably the best all-rounder in the history of motorsport. He's even got the looks, being described as a Paul Newman lookalike!

The book intertwines the on-track action and Winters's quest for a second title against arch-rival Tony Bishop (*presumably not the same Tony Bishop who carried off the Monoposto F3 class title last year – ed*) with the main plotline as he attempts to get the CIA off his back while travelling from race to race, beginning with the Russian Grand Prix in Sochi (above).

On the motorsport front there is a good amount of knowledge from Kelly – he's no stranger to the world of racing, having worked in PR and been involved with NASCAR for a number of decades.

References to Michael Schumacher and Mario Andretti without explanation of who they are does mean it would help for the reader to be a casual motorsport fan, but there's enough detail about certain aspects of the championship that mean it's certainly accessible, even a gateway, to non-F1 fans as well.

Chapters vary in length from anywhere between a single page to a dozen, which helps to break up the reading into chunks and also allows for the plot to move on at a pace where needed. And while most of the time it's written from Winters's point of view, side characters are also given their own chapters, such as his right-hand man and best pal, Jack Madigan.

Generally the writing is slick and the dialogue mostly engaging, interjected with plenty of swear words, but there are close to half a dozen grammatical errors across the 323-page book that hopefully will be ironed out ahead of its release in July.

While not necessarily plot-holes, there are events that seem beyond the realms of possibility – even for F1 – and that's before adding the CIA undercover business into the mix.



WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

IndyCar Series

Round 5/15

Indianapolis, USA

15 May

TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1930

Indy Lights

Round 3/10

Indianapolis, USA

14-15 May

Super Formula

Round 3/7

Autopolis, Japan

16 May

TV Livestream on Motorsport.tv
Sun 0600

Euroformula Open

Round 2/8

Paul Ricard, France

15-16 May

International GT Open

Round 1/7

Paul Ricard, France

15-16 May

ADAC GT Masters

Round 1/7

Oschersleben, Germany

15-16 May

European Le Mans Series

Round 2/6

Red Bull Ring, Austria

16 May

TV Livestream on Motorsport.tv
Sat 1350, Sun 0935

IMSA SportsCar

Round 3/12

Mid-Ohio, USA

16 May

NASCAR Cup

Round 13/36

Dover, USA

16 May

TV Live Premiers Sports 2, Sun 1830

NASCAR Xfinity

Round 10/33

Dover, USA

15 May

MotoGP

Round 5/19

Le Mans, France

16 May

TV Live ITV4, Sun 0945,
BT Sport 2, Sun 1230,

UK MOTORSPORT

Silverstone National MSVR*

15-16 May

Clubmans, Ecurie Classic, Elise Trophy,
F3 Cup, Focus Cup, Heritage FF1600,
MSVR Allcomers, Trackday Trophy

Brands Hatch MSVR*

15-16 May

Ferrari Challenge, Ferrari Classic

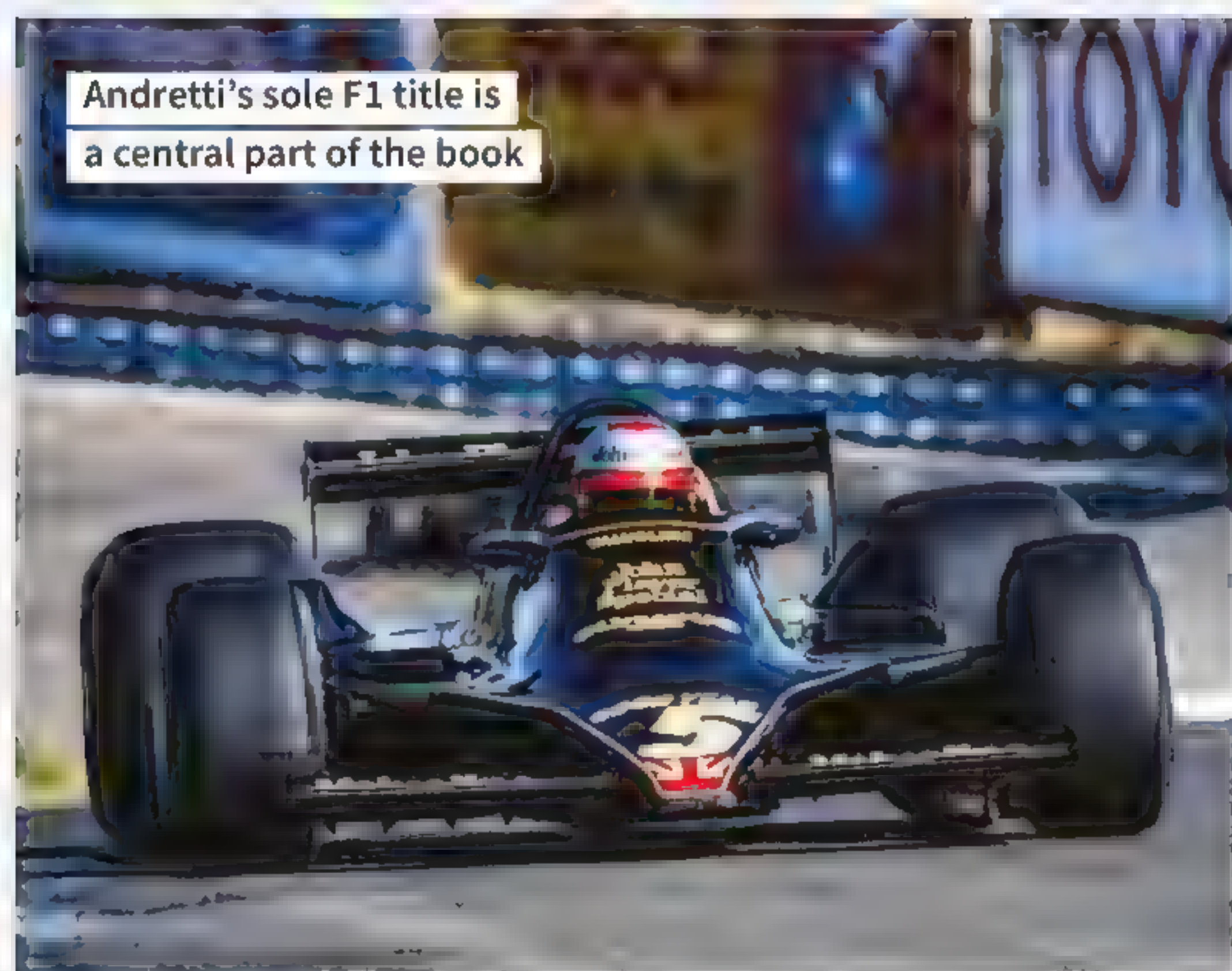
Croft BRSCC*

15-16 May

BMW Compact Cup, ClubSport Trophy,
Fiestas, Fiesta Juniors, Mazda MX-5
Championship/Clubman/Mk4 Trophy/
Supercup, ST-XR Challenge

*Behind closed doors

WAYS THAN ONE



PHIPPS/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Winters being given the chance to essentially kick-start his career after meeting and befriending a multi-millionaire German businessman in a bar – all after punching a man for assaulting a woman – is one example, while an F1 driver spending their downtime in South Africa's Kruger National Park tracking down rhino poachers might be what they all want to do, but it's not likely to happen.

The book is amusing in places, and any motorsport novel that gives mention to a Toby Carvery of all things within its pages is certainly worth a read, in this writer's opinion.

Novels are not for everyone and, when the subject of racing is employed, there will be diehard motorsport fans who find it all too easy to turn their noses up. But *Deadly Driver* has as many twists and turns as Monaco, all of which keep it interesting until the chequered flag.

STEFAN MACKLEY





motorsport.com

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TOP FIVE



F1 TO INDYCAR DRIVERS

With Romain Grosjean the latest former Formula 1 driver to make the switch to IndyCar with Dale Coyne Racing, we pick out the converts who made the best impression Stateside

JAMES NEWBOLD



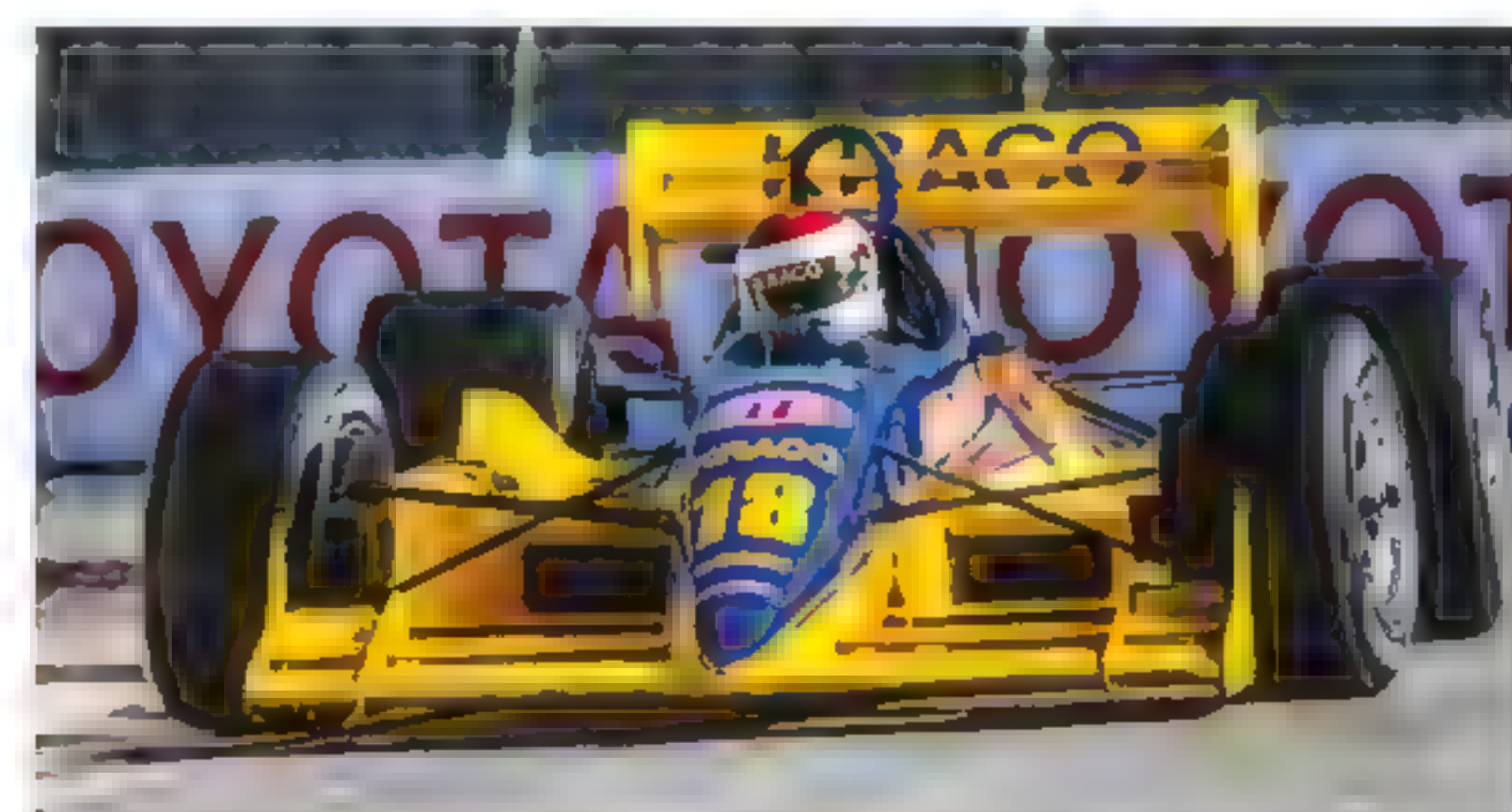
JIM CLARK

5 Clark surely had many more F1 wins and titles in him when he was killed at the peak of his powers in 1968, but likely had more to give in IndyCar racing too. The Scot skipped the 1965 Monaco Grand Prix to dominate that year's Indianapolis 500, leading 190 laps, and twice was second in the 500, on his debut in 1963 and again in 1966. He underlined his versatility in select USAC outings, winning from pole at Milwaukee in 1963.



BOBBY RAHAL

4 It's often forgotten that the three-time IndyCar champion and 1986 Indy 500 winner served part of his apprenticeship in European Formula 3 in 1978, making his F1 debut with Wolf that year. When that proved a dead end, Rahal dabbled in sportscars before placing second in his 1982 rookie season. He tallied at least one podium in each of the next 16 years until he retired in 1998, and won the 1992 title with his own team.



ALEX ZANARDI

3 Down on his luck after a fruitless spell at the financially troubled Lotus F1 team, Zanardi was recommended to Chip Ganassi by Reynard's Rick Gorne. The Italian was an astute signing, building on a strong rookie season in 1996 to deliver titles in 1997 and 1998 before his muted F1 return in 1999. But with a catalogue of superb comeback drives, a knack for brazen passes and fondness for victory donuts, he'd made his mark.



EMERSON FITTIPALDI

2 Fittipaldi's IndyCar career was a fruitful Indian summer for the double F1 world champion that yielded two Indy 500 wins, but he should have had more. After an Indy 500/IndyCar title double with Patrick Racing in 1989, he joined Penske and lost a likely second Indy win in 1990 to tyre blistering. Indy redemption came in 1993, but shunting at Phoenix proved costly in the title race. He'd rather forget his 1994 Indy-losing blunder.



NIGEL MANSELL

1 An oval racing novice, reigning F1 world champion Mansell rocked up in 1993 and won the title with four oval victories along the way. After a stellar debut win at Surfers Paradise, a heavy Phoenix practice crash injured his back, but Mansell was undeterred and proved he could win on all circuit types, including short tracks and superspeedways. His title defence was tame by comparison, but no rookie has repeated his feat.





FROM THE ARCHIVE

Reigning world champion Jacques Villeneuve lights up his skinny, grooved rear Goodyears as he exits his pitbox during the 1998 German Grand Prix at Hockenheim. He had

qualified his Williams-Mechachrome FW20 an impressive third on the grid behind the McLarens of polesitter Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard, and was chasing the pair down in the closing laps after start-to-finish race

leader Hakkinen was forced to curtail his pace. This was the first of just two podium finishes for the Quebecois during his title defence – he was also third next time out in Hungary – and he ended the season fifth in the points.

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IN DEFENCE OF...

TRACK LIMITS

"We've lost the victory, fastest lap, and pole position. I hope that's the end of it. Something has to change." That's how Red Bull motorsport advisor Helmut Marko responded to Formula 1 TV reporters at the Portuguese Grand Prix after a spate of high-profile track-limit infringements.

Track limits will always be debated just as long as circuits remember to paint the thin white lines. Track-limit breaches, such as Max Verstappen's downfall at key moments over the early rounds of the 2021 F1 season, feel like a modern conundrum, but have been part of the rules since the formation of circuit racing.

The issue has become magnified due to asphalt runoffs for safety purposes, the improvement in technology to police track limits, and closer margins in performance. When a couple of thousandths can make the difference, grabbing those extra centimetres is all the more tempting.

The gaining of any advantage has to be within the rules, which is why track limits is a hot topic. But doing away with them isn't an option. Marko, like many others, wants natural deterrents for exceeding track limits – bigger kerbs, gravel or grass

– which are viable but only if safe. For many circuits to be a sustainable business, the highest safety standards must be upheld for car and bike racing, which means runoffs must suit both.

That's not to say that bike racing has it any easier, as MotoGP's Maverick Vinales also found out in Portugal last month, when he lost two laps in qualifying for marginal track limits, dropping from the front row to 12th. But whether it's a few centimetres or a mile, if you're off, you're off.

The debate draws parallels to football's VAR grievances when offside calls are decided by a toe. Much like motorsport's frustrations, these are understandable as they can determine a match outcome, but referees are applying what is required with the technology available.

Which brings it back to the close calls on track limits. Tiny infringements seem innocuous but, if it's the difference that decides pole position, the right and consistent rule is required. While the argument for 'natural' track limits remains valid when safely applied, it doesn't ignore that track limits are here to stay.

HAYDN COBB

IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

Fernando's last chance?

ALONSO ON HIS LATEST QUEST FOR A THIRD F1 TITLE

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